MINISTERO DELLA PUBBLICA ISTRUZIONE
DIREZIONE GENERALE DELLE ANTICHITÀ E BELLE ARTI

GUIDE-BOOKS TO THE MUSEUMS AND MONUMENTS OF ITALY

AMEDEO MAIURI

CAPRI

ITS HISTORY AND ITS MONUMENTS

(WITH SEVENTY ILLUSTRATIONS AND ONE MAP)

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Douglas Marshall

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No. 93

OF THE SERIES

GUIDE-BOOKS TO THE MUSEUMS AND MONUMENTS OF ITALY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

FURCHEIM'S bibliography, which is by now out of date, as far back as 1916, listed no less than 655 publications about Capri, but among so many books there has appeared so far no short Guide, that, avoiding rapturous descriptions of the beauties of the island and of the myths surrounding it, provides accurate information about what Capri represents in the history and in the life itself of the Neapolitan gulf and the whole of Campania. And such a guide is needed to meet the requirements of not a few among Capri's visitors, for whom Capri is more than an excuse for a Sunday outing or for a fleeting glance at the enchanting Grotta Azzurra.

This need has been more keenly felt since the recent excavations of Villa Jovis *and* Damecuta *and a reassessment of others among the principal ruins have added new and useful data to what was already known about ancient Capri and its buildings of the imperial age.*

By adding this new " Itinerary „ to the other " Itineraries „ illustrating the principal archaeological centres of Campania it is intended mainly to satisfy these requirements, besides providing readers with the necessary information about Capri's mediaeval and modern history and about the monuments and private buildings belonging to these later ages.

Like the other " Itineraries „ also the present one is intended to be of practical use as a guide, though it does not aim at replacing the ordinary more general tourist guidebooks of Naples and Campania. Therefore a section containing information about the best way by which the monuments of historic and artistic interest may be reached, precedes in this booklet the historical and descriptive section.

Capri, Summer of 1955. *A. M.*

HOW TO REACH CAPRI. Capri is connected with Naples daily by two principal sea routes (SPAN): a direct service (taking 1 ½ hours); and a coastal service touching Sorrento and Massa (taking 2–2 ¼ hours). Other through services (N. L. G.) are provided during the tourist season (May–October). There are thus six daily sailings from Naples before noon (between 7.50 and 9.25) and two during the afternoon; and respectively two morning sailings from Capri to Naples, and six in the afternoon. There are in addition during the summer two services connecting Capri with Sorrento, Positano and Amalfi, and with Ischia. There is also a bi-weekly air service during the summer months between Southampton (England) and Capri.

These frequent and rapid communications by sea and air ensure the possibility of day visits of a general tourist kind; but thoroughly to know and to enjoy Capri a stay of at least two or three days is necessary.

ITINERARIES

I. – VILLA JOVIS (45–50 minutes). From the square, the crossroads of the *Croce* is reached either by *Via Fuorlovado* or by *Via Soprammonte*. From the crossroads one walks up to the left passing in front of the small church of S. Michele (p. 105) and then along a level stretch one follows the bottom of the valley between Colle S. Michele and the heights rising towards Matromania. The road, truly country-like in character, crosses the sections of *Monetella* and *Moneta* (the names recalling a supposed villa dedicated to Juno Moneta or the discovery of some ancient treasure), and in the vicinity of the last houses, comes in sight of the grand ruins crowning the top of the mountain. By climbing towards the right to the small section of *Pietra* one reaches, after a last short ascent, the ridge of Monte di Lauro which is shaded by a thick grove of cypresses, and passing beneath the Torre del Faro, one reaches the entrance of the excavations. Tickets of admission and guides are to be obtained in a typical Capri house, that is known as " Casa di Carmelina „ from the name of one of the most popular Capri figures who was for many a year in charge of the remains.

II. – GROTTA DI MATROMANIA (p. 86). After reaching the *Croce* crossroads either by *Via Fuorlovado* or by *Via Soprammonte*, one takes the road to the right leading to the villas and houses in the little Matromania valley; one goes down by a stepped road to the famous rocky archway of the *Arco Naturale*, a wonderful opening through the magnificent massive mountain side forming the ridge and the edge of the plateau of Monte Tiberio; and then, by a further descent amid wilder rocks, there is found the opening of the Grotta di Matromania looking like a cave of mystery (20 minutes from the crossroads).

From the " Grotta di Matromania ,, , instead of climbing back to the *Arco Naturale* and the Matromania valley, one goes further down as far as the picturesque path skirting the lower reaches of Monte Tuoro (*Via Solitaria* or *del Circumtelegrafo*) there is a view here of one of the most picturesque sections of the coast line between *Punta Masullo* and the *Faraglioni* with a prospect at a resting place at *Pizzolungo*, on the *Cala del Fico*, the *Baia di Tragàra* and the rock of *Monacone* (which is supposed to be Màsgaba's tomb).

A long wall belonging to the Roman harbour buildings may be viewed in the eastern cove by walking down as far as the narrow and rocky promontory of Tragàra.

A steep path leads up to *Via Tragàra* and from there one reaches *Via Camerella*, the hotels and the centre of Capri.

III. – Castiglione. Walking up to the Castiglione along the steep and narrow lanes which lead up to the *Valentino* section from the S. Stefano church and the Cerio palace in a bewildering sequence of arches, porches and wide landscapes one gets the opportunity of seeing the most typically mediaeval quarter of Capri. It clusters around the Castello which is now modernized and inhabited. A few remains on the north side mark the place where a rich Roman villa was excavated by Hadrawa in 1776. To this villa no doubt belonged the belvedere terrace on which the Castello was built, as well as the Grotta del Castiglione opening on the southern slope (p. 84).

IV. – Palazzo a Mare and Baths of Tiberius. Walking down along the carriage road of the Grande Marina, immediately beyond the S. Costanzo Church (on the left, see p. 106), by the last turning, one takes the narrow street on the left, which starting in front of the Bristol Hotel follows one of the principal roads which once led to the ancient villa of Augustus called " Palazzo a Mare ,,. By the little fort on the right and within *Villa Williams* (formerly Dubuf) there are remains of reticulate masonry belonging to the living quarters of the imperial residence (a collection of marble pieces and sculptures is preserved in the Villa). Further on there existed the garden and the *xystus* of the imperial villa on the vast rectangular area of the playing ground (formerly called " Campo di Marte ,, which on the land side, is supported by sturdy walls and vaulted terracing structures. Leaving the esplanade, one descends on the western side by an ancient path among vineyards (in the *Villa Stepanow* on the right there are large cisterns supplying water to the Nymphaeum below) to the wild wooded gorge of *Porcello*, below the bare side of Monte Solaro and thence, steeply, to the " Baths of Tiberius ,,.

The " Baths of Tiberius ,, are reached by sea by a daily service of boats from the " Marina Grande ,,. By skirting the coast in a boat one still sees along the crumbling ridge a row of holm oaks, the tree that grew green again on the first landing of Augustus.

V. – Grotta Azzurra. One hundred and thirty years after the " Blue Grotto ,, was discovered, or at all events officially listed among the world's marvels, its visitors have been compelled to fall into step with the restrictions demanded by organized tourist traffic. And the visit or rather the " operation ,, as it is called by local seamen, to the " Blue Grotto ,, is carried out according to fixed rules, more or less peaceably agreed upon between travel agencies, motorboat owners, couriers, boatmen and officials who exact the payment of state and municipal dues. The ever increasing number of tourists renders a rotation necessary as well as much patient waiting in front of the entrance hole, which, like the gates of enchanted castles, allows

visitors to imagine rather than to espy, what may be expected within. Despite these minor troubles and other transient seaborn difficulties, the " operation „ at the Grotto makes the most testy and dissatisfied visitor feel that he has himself discovered the " Blue Grotto „ and discerned the secret magic of Capri through special lenses.

VI. – Scala Fenicia (Phoenician Stairway) begins in the section of *Torre* by " Palazzo a Mare „ in connexion with what originally was the most ancient Greek settlement in Capri; it passes then through the sections of *Fossa* and *Porcello* reaching the slope which it attacks at first by steep ramps and later by increasingly steep steps as far as the crossing of the carriage way by " Cappella S. Antonio „ beneath the *Capodimonte* rock (now called S. Michele); beyond the carriage way, the last stretch of steps cut into the rock ends within the ancient gate of the citadel and of the Barbarossa Castle which has a drawbridge and, because of the feud between the two municipalitien, the gate was given the name of *Porta della Differenzia*. Up to 1877 the *Phoenician Stairway* was the most direct route between the Marina and Anacapri; the loads were mainly carried by the women of Anacapri whose physical sturdiness and beauty was much admired by travellers in the island; nowadays only the Anacapri fishermen run down it in the morning to reach the Marina. A modern tourist provided with good lungs and good will, finds in that ascent the only means by which he may revenge himself against the motor transportation pestering the island.

VII. – Damecuta Villa. An old and uncomfortable path led from the central square of Anacapri, through the *Boffe* section (the most typical Capri section in the whole island), to the Torre di Damecuta and the Grotta Azzurra. Nowadays, one follows the new roadway which from Via Pagliara, passing below the " Windmill „ (now in ruin; the most superb view of the whole western side of the island may be enjoyed from it) reaches the site called *Olivastra:* from there a recently repaired foot–path, skirting the picturesque edge of the plateau (magnificent view towards the Coves *del Lupinaro* and *del Rio* and on the promontories of *Orrico*, *Campetiello* and *del Pino* with their ruined little forts as far as the Torre della Guardia) leads to the entrance of the archaeological zone by an easy level road in about 10–15 minutes.

After viewing the excavations, visitors who feel equal to tackling the rocky paths of the island may go down, by a difficult path on the eastern side, to Villa Gràdola above the Blue Grotto and go back by sea to the " Grande Marina „ or to the " Baths of Tiberius „.

Along the old mule–path of the Blue Grotto, in the section *Pozzo*, one may see some few remains of a Roman Villa and one skirts the sections of *Timberino* and *Veterino*, sites on which small Roman villas and farms are reputed to have existed.

VIII. – La Mígliara and The Lighthouse. Two mule–paths, the *Strada della Migliara* and the *Strada del Faro* (lighthouse) cross the farthest western section of the island and offer the possibility of enjoying its less spectacular, but not less picturesque natural beauties. The *Strada della Migliara* starting from the opposite slope of Monte S. Michele (Munthe's S. Michele) running, half way up the mountain side, and almost always level, reaches the opposite western edge, where, in the vicinity of a few remains of a villa or of an ancient belvedere, the *Belvedere della Migliara* looks down upon a most precipitous and wild scenery of rocks and crags where the western promontory of the island drops sheer into the sea by *Punta Carena* (pointed and sharp as a ship's bow) and the *Torre del Faro*.

A more exacting path leads to the Torre della Guardia below and from there to the more comfortable *Strada del Faro*.

To reach the Lighthouse one takes the mule–path in the small square at the end of Caprile (at a lower altitude) one passes along the Queen of Sweden's Villa which blocks the gorge, and then in front of the Torre di Materita (see p. 102) which was Axel Munthe's last residence and is shaded by oaks (a little lower down is the Cappella di S. Cataldo); finally walking round the last boulders among which the small prehistoric cave of Pisco opens, one reaches in sight of the *Forte del Pino*, of the *Cala del Limbo* and of the *Torre del Faro* through a hedge of giant juniper bushes.

IX. – S. Maria a Cetrella and Monte Solaro. The Sanctuary is reached by walking up the mule–path which starts from *Via del S. Michele*, between Villa Giulia and the Foresteria (Guesthouse) del S. Michele; the road rises steeply at first and then by wide and easy turnings along the slope of the mountain gradually revealing views of the lower buildings of Anacapri and its suburbs sunk among vineyards, olive groves, oaks and carobs. Beyond the last steep ramps of Monte Cappello, by the *Crocetta*, a path on the right leads to the summit of Monte Solaro (589 m.); another path along a green plateau (on its left are the passes of *Passetiello* and *Anginola* formerly the only passes joining Anacapri with Capri) leads to the opposite edge of the mountain (435 m.) from which the hermitage of S. Maria a Cetrella looks down (popular religious festivities on August 15th and September 7th and 8th).

Turning back, one may reach Monte Solaro by cable–way (the station is in " Piazza del Monumento ,, in Anacapri) and, after enjoying the airy view of the island, the gulf, and of the Tyrrhenian coast line from the island of Ponza to the shore of Paestum, one descends to the little valley of Cetrella.

To reach Castel Barbarossa (after obtaining a permit at the Villa del S. Michele) one walks up the same mule–path and takes the path on the left at the first crossroad.

PART I

HISTORICAL NOTES

PREHISTORIC CAPRI

The prehistoric period of Capri forms one of the most interesting chapters of the prehistoric age of Italy. It contributes above all essential information concerning the earliest geological vicissitudes of this island; its original existence as a part of the submerged territory of Tyrrhene; its breaking away from the continent; its earliest formation as an island, and its civilization.

The first discoveries about Capri's prehistoric age were due to the Romans. The architects and the slaves who worked on the first imperial buildings, while digging the foundations of those huge edifices, made a striking discovery: they found gigantic bones of primeval animals and strange stone weapons as might be used by the heroes of legends and myths. Bones and weapons were shown to Augustus, who, while disinclined to have his mansion stocked with rare and precious works of art, chose to preserve those strange and valuable remains of Capri's primeval age in his island villa; thus the earliest palaentological and palethnological museum was housed in the villa of Augustus. It is Suetonius who mentions this as one of the most singular traits in the emperor's character and life; the biographer's Latin is simple and easy (*Vita Augusti*, 72): " *qualia sunt Capreis immanium belluarum ferarumque membra praegrandia, quae dicuntur gigantum ossa et arma heroum* „ (" he particularly took pleasure in things uncommon by age and rarity such are in Capri the gigantic bones of huge monsters and wild animals and the weapons of heroes „).

Suetonius words and his unusual information concerning Augustus' liking for bone fossils and prehistoric products of Capri were unexpectedly corroborated in 1905 when, while preparing the ground for the foundations of an addition to the Quisisana hotel in the little *Tragàra* valley, there were unearthed more gigantic bones of long-dead animal species, such as *Elephas primigenius* (*mammoth*), *Rhinoceros Merckii, Ursus spelaeus,* together with stone offensive and defensive weapons, such as flint and quartzite cusps, sharpened and splintered, triangular and almond-shaped of the Chellean and Mousterian types

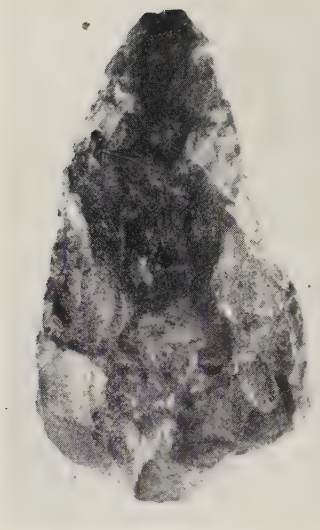

FIG. 1 – QUARTZITE CUSP
FROM THE PALEOLITHIC STRATUM
OF THE QUISISANA HOTEL

(*fig. 1*), instruments of primitive warfare which lay beneath a heavy layer of volcanic material within a bank of red clay of the quaternary age, sunk and mixed in the dessicated mud of an ancient lake basin. It was Ignazio Cerio, a physician and naturalist, who identified and gathered from those foundation diggings these new precious documents of Capri's paleozoical life reaching back into prehistory by several scores of millenniums. And although human bones were not found during that chance discovery nor during later explorative excavations in 1908 and 1910, the presence of those tooled stones, and particularly of a fine triangular cusp of the Chellean type, remove every doubt as to whether paleolithic man lived in Capri together with those primordial mammals as the geophysical and climatic conditions (water basins, rivers and tropical climate) rendered possible. It was the inter-glacial age of the disappeared Tyrrhene, an age that may be approximately set about the fiftieth millennium B. C.

A long and convulsed period of time went by while the land sank, emerged again from the sea, and broke away from the mainland so as to form the island; the successive levels reached by the sea while the land sank and emerged may be found by observing the deposits and the erosions which these changes of level produced along the profile of the rocks and within the hollows of the caves; from a minimum height of 5 metres above sea level one passes to 550 metres along the northern slope of Monte Solaro.

Volcanic cataclisms which, by emersions and submersions at times sudden at times very slow through earthquakes and eruptions of volcanoes that have also disappeared, gave the gulf of Naples the formation it has now and to Capri its existence as an island; then, between the later stone age and the bronze age, living men have left traces within caves as well as in the

FIG. 2 — THE GROTTA DELLE FELCI

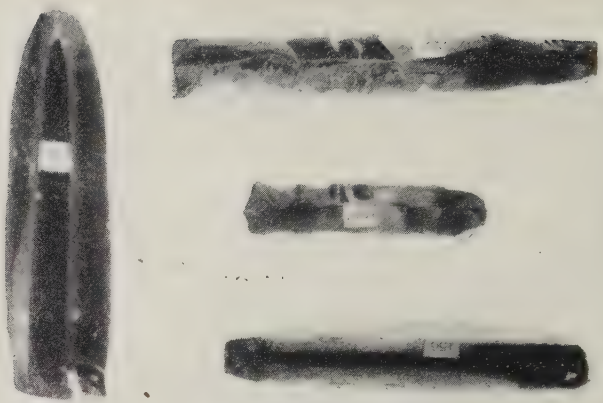

FIG. 3 – OBSIDIAN AENEOLITHIC KNIVES AND SCRAPERS

open; and these traces are still discernible particularly where the Romans did not upset the sedimentary layer by constructing their nymphaea within the caves or superimposed their large buildings over the huts and the hearths of the prehistoric settlements. Along with the changed conditions of nature and climate, there were changed needs and manners of life; to the fierce and unequal struggles with the wilde beasts of the jungle, there followed the practice of fishing and hunting, there developed a handicraft for making pots and pans; grinding wheels and grinders were employed to crush existing cereals and wild fruit for preserving, water dripping through the fissures in the caves was treasured to make up for the lack of springs.

So far the most important prehistoric settlement of this period that has been discovered in the island is to be found in the " Grotta delle Felci „ (" The Grotto of ferns „) wich is situated above the " Piccola Marina „ in the rocky slope of Monte Solaro (*fig. 2*). Rather than a cave it is a rock protected shelter; but several tribes successively lived and were busy here between the end of the neolithic age and the bronze age thus showing that this rather mean shelter, as compared with the large and vast caves of the Castiglione hill, of Matromania and of the Arsenal, was important as a look–out station, for it commanded the " Piccola Marina „ cove below from a proper height, and allowed

FIG. 4 – PAINTED EARTHENWARE FROM THE GROTTA DELLE FELCI

for a quick descent to it, to go fishing along the broken coast line of Capri

Excavations were first started by Ignazio Cerio, more systematically pursued by Rellini and recently by Buchner, and they brought to light a vast amount of materials mainly belonging to dwellings and, to a lesser extent, to tombs: a typical flint dagger of the neolithic age, burnishers, sleekers, clubs, cudgels, diorite and sandstone sling missiles, obsidian knives and scrapers (*fig. 3*), millstones and grinders with yellow ochre residues; and besides many fine fragments of that polychrome ceramic ware with slender light brown decorations on a light yellow background, that is the first artistic product of prehistoric earthenware craft (*fig. 4*); together with them, also jars of a blackish malm decorated by deep spiral incisions filled with a white chalky paste (*fig. 5*).

During recent excavations a less common find were two small rounded stones coarsely painted with a human figure which are to be added to the precious series of the earliest figured representations of prehistoric art.

More prehistoric material that was gathered in the several places in the island proves that during the aeneolithic and

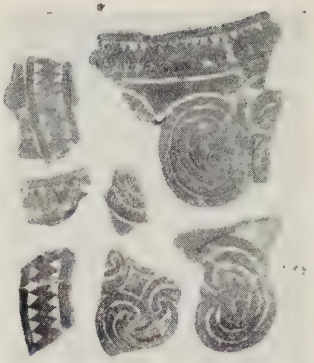

FIG. 5 – ENGRAVED AND DECORATED EARTHENWARE FROM THE GROTTA DELLE FELCI

bronze ages there was a rather intense life on either slope of Capri and Anacapri; such as over a thousand small knives and scrapers made of obsidian deposits in the island of Palmarola found at *Le Parate*; a jadeite chisel and a limestone axe at the *Petrara*, and other items at *Via Tiberio* and *Via Krupp* on the eastern slope. In the prehistoric settlements so far discovered, however, no traces have been found of a more extended trading activity with the great centres of civilization on the Mediterranean, which would be the necessary prelude to a Greek colonization.

GREEK CAPRI

The cycle of its remote prehistoric civilization being thus closed Capri also takes its place within the great complex of the Greek colonization of Campania. But religious cults and legends set both Capri and Sorrento apart from the other Greek colonies in the Gulf of Naples. For, while the western sector of this gulf together with the island of *Pithecusae* (Ischia) was historically and religiously connected with the Chalcidian colony of Cuma and the cult of oracular Apollo, the eastern section, as well as Capri and the peninsula of Sorrento, only knew the cult of the Sirens, which, with the cult of the Siren *Parthénope*, had its extreme boundary at the Greek *Palaepolis*. Also the myths involving the settling of the Greek colonies differ. According to the legend, the Teleboian people, who were the first settlers on the shores of Acarnania and of the Greek islands in the Jonian sea, reached Capri before the first Trojan war, and Virgil poetically told that while *Telon* was king in Capri, the nymph *Sebethides* bore him *Oébalus*, a hero who brought many towns and lands of Campania under the sway of the Teleboi:

> *Nec tu carminibus nostris indictus abibis,*
> *Oebale, quem generasse Telon Sebethide nympha*
> *fertur, Teleboumque Capreas quum regna teneret*
> *jam senior....* (VIRG., VII, 733 ss.).

FIG. 6 – MOUNT SOLARO BETWEEN THE EASTERN AND THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE ISLAND

We must take it then that the colonizing streams reaching the eastern section of the gulf belonged to different stocks and dates.

During the seventh and sixth centuries B. C. the whole political and shipping life of the gulf centred on Cuma. To Cuma was entrusted the task of warding off the danger of an Etruscan inroad, whereas Capri, which by the very religious and political ties of its colonization was linked to Sorrento, did not have, and could not have, as important a function as the islands of the Pithecusan group had with regard to Cuma and Neapolis. Thus Capri played no important part in the historical events of the Greek and Samnitic ages in Campania.

From the time of its earliest colonization the natural conformation of the island conditioned its demographic development. Mount Solaro (589 m.) with its sheer dolomitic slopes formed an unsurpassable partition between the eastern and the western sectors of the island (*fig. 6*), and consequently divided it into two parts almost independent from one another; the eastern

sector having several heights sloping towards the sea on the north and on the south; the western being constituted by a vast plateau and the sheer face of Mount Solaro and offering no actual possibilities to a landing. As the Greek islands of the Aegean sea showed, and still show, dwellings along the sea, and dwellings on the heights in fortified and naturally strong positions having the function of strongholds and acropoles, so it happened in Capri where there was a sea city, Capri, and a mountain city, Anacapri, a name equivalent to *Anòpolis*, "the city above,,. The plural form of the original name both in Greek and in Latin: Κάπρεαι–*Capreae* was presumably due to this twofold location. The name, in so far as the Greeks are concerned, is to be traced back, unless it were a place name pertaining to the Mediterranean substratum, rather to the Greek word Κάπρος–wild boar, than to the Latin *capra*–goat. More clearly Greek is the place–name *Tragàra* which could not be severed from τράγος–buck, and τραγάριον–an enclosure or pen for goats.

But while Capri by possessing two sea–shores, one on the north (Grande Marina) and one on the south (Piccola Marina), had its natural acropolis between the hills of Castiglione and S. Michele, Anacapri lacked the essential condition for complete independence, a landing shore; it had consequently to find an opening towards the Capri shore, and reached it by cutting a rocky path into the steepest side of Mount Solaro (the so–called Scala fenicia). From ancient time until to–day the fortunes of these two centres of the island have been conditioned by their particular location being separate and relatively independent from one another. Whether autonomous during the period of their first free Greek constitution or politically linked, they were united by Augustus. Strabo in his accurate description of the land and the sea of ancient Campania bears witness to this (*Geogr.*, V): ἀι δὲ Κάπρεαι δύο πολίχνας εἶχον τὸ παλαιόν ὕστερον δὲ μίαν "anciently Capri had two small towns, but later only one,,. He was writing in the days of Augustus and was referring to the unification that had taken place in his time. But actually the island could never be really independent politically because of the command of the sea that first Cuma and later Naples exercised; up to 29 B. C. it certainly formed part of the Neapolitan state, and it was then included in the Emperor's personal estate.

Topography. The Romans during the reigns of Augustus and of Tiberius altered so thoroughly the aspect of things that almost all traces of Capri's life as a Greek island with its two townlets at the sea side and on the hills, have disappeared.

Of the Greek acropolis of Capri there still remain two stretches of the defensive wall partly of fine limestone blocks, square in shape and arranged in horizontal layers and partly according to the earlier technique of pseudopoligonal blocks, that are to be seen along the edge by the station of the funicular railway incorporated within houses and later mediaeval masonry (*fig.* 7), and together with another stretch which up to a few years ago was visible along the lower slopes of the Castiglione hill, and with other wall stretches which were possibly already destroyed in the Roman age, they formed the encircling perimeter of the most ancient inhabited buildings of Capri (fifth–fourth centuries B. C.). But already in the Hellenistic age, and certainly during the Roman one, the Greek settlement was shifted from the enclosure of the acropolis towards the sea shore scattering its houses and its buildings in the *Aiano* sector, where the most ancient church of the Marina (S. Costanzo) was later to be erected, and on the fine almost level terraces which stretch above and to the west of the present landing place: namely ad *Campodipisco* which must have provided sufficient room for a public playing ground and for the Ephebaeum (that was the most natural centre for games and meetings of the youth of Capri) in its vast rectangular square supported on all sides by walls built in the Roman and the mediaeval ages; at *Villanova* where the numerous remains of walls and floorings close up to the houses on the Marina have provided the most important remains of the ancient settlement; and, finally, by the *Truglio* fountain on the Marina, where in 1826 no less than six statues were found, besides columns, pipes and marbles, making it certain that a public edifice

FIG. 7 – THE GREEK WALL OF THE CAPRI "ARX,,

existed in that place. To the fact that the principal centre of the island was later, but already during the pre-Roman age, situated here, are due the great reservoirs of *Soprafontana* and of *Acquaviva* wich were built by the Romans in order that the inhabitants of the principal centre of the Marina should be enabled to take advantage of the scant water slowly flowing into the reservoirs from the springs. Also the choice of a site for the most ancient imperial Villa (*Palazzo a Mare*), as well as the possibility for Augustus to take a lively share in the life of the Capri youths in August of the year 14 a. D., are to be connected with this later topographical location. During the middle ages, because of the impending menace of piratical landings, the dwellings were once more shifted towards the hill within the walls of the acropolis: they were scattered in groups under the protection of the castles on the S. Michele and Castiglione hills; and sometimes the people even sought shelter in the vast and almost inaccessible cavern of the Castiglione hill.

The burying grounds of Greek Capri, either of the first colonists during the seventh and sixth centuries, or of the golden period of trading with the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean seas, at a time when all the Campanian burying grounds overflowed with fine Greek earthenware and precious adornments, have not, yet been found. Myths and legends consequently lack the required corroborating evidence deriving from findings in tombs. The most ancient tombs contain Italic pottery of the fourth century B. C. at the earliest, and some few later Greek inscriptions of a funerary character show that even during the Roman age the Greek and Latin languages as well as Greek and Roman burying rites were promiscuously used.

The little town of A n a c a p r i , higher up, was protected by the situation of the almost impenetrable plateau on which it stands, and the most notable monument of its Greek character is constituted by the so-called S c a l a f e n i c i a (Phoenician Stairway), that with its 500 steps and over, formed at one time Anacapri's only link with the Capri Marina. The stairway has been repaired and rebuilt several times; it preserves, however, in its highest section, steps cut into the rock, according to the practice of the Greeks who used this system to link their inaccessible acropoles to the sea shore in the rocky islands of the Aegean sea (*fig. 8*).

Monuments and inscriptions being so scarce, the clearest evidence concerning the Greek character of the customs and language in Capri is provided by what Suetonius tells about the first landing and the last stay of Augustus in the island he cherished so dearly.

FIG. 8 — THE LAST STRETCH OF THE SCALA FENICIA

Octavianus Caesar, who had not yet assumed the sacred name of Augustus, on his return from the war in the east in 29 B. C. while sailing towards Naples, his eyes still dazzled by the sight of the Greek islands, after skirting cape Athenaeum, landed in Capri. And just as a magic golden branch had appeared to Aeneas in the sacred forest of Cuma, so was the first landing in Capri of the new Caesar greeted by a singular prodigy: an old withered green oak, suddenly grew new branches and buds. It was a favourable presage for a man who was expected to bring new life to the old trunk of the Roman republic. And he was so greatly cheered by this presage and so pleased with his stay amid woods and little temples, amid pools consecrated to the Nymphs and two quiet townlets which reminded him of the luminous sea-shores of Greece, that he did not hesitate to accomplish one of his earliest acts of command: he freed Capri from its dependence on Naples and turned it into a private estate of his incipient imperial authority; as a compensation he gave back to Naples the larger and more fertile island of Ischia that had been taken away from the Neapolitans by Sulla as a punishment for their loyalty to the Marian party. So runs the account of Suetonius. (Svet. *Vita Aug.* 92: " *Apud Capreas insulam veterrimae ilicis dimissos ramos convaluisse adventu suo adeo laetatus est, et eas cum republica Neapolitanorum permutaverit Aenaria data* „). Capri's imperial life began from that moment. From its lonely and unknown existence as a small Tyrrhenian island, it was turned into the favourite residence of Augustus, the founder, and of Tiberius, the first relentless defender of the empire; so that it became for several years the centre of Rome's Mediterranean life.

We do not know how often Augustus took up his residence in Capri during his fortythree years of rule. But the new juridical and administrative constitution entrusting the island, as *patrimonium principis* to *liberti procuratores*, and the first buildings of the imperial residence, were certainly due to him. At all events his must have been short summer visits, such as he liked making while sailing along the coasts of Latium and Campania stopping in the most quiet coves and in the imperial villas (Svet., *Vita Aug.*, 72: " *ex secessibus praecipue frequentavit maritima insulasque Campaniae...* „).

We are better informed about his last four days' stay in Capri during the summer of 14 a. D., shortly before his death in his ancestral house at Nola; for Suetonius (*Vita Aug.*, 98) has given

us an account of it in a fresh and significant biographical and descriptive passage. [1]

The story of those days, which were to become memorable, begins with the meeting in the bay of Pozzuoli of the imperial trireme with some sailors of Alexandria, who shouting acclaimed Augustus, the giver of peace and wealth, from the bridge of their ship. Then Suetonius describes the emperor's favourite occupations while staying in Capri; and it clearly appears from them how much Augustus liked to gain the love of the inhabitants of an island, that like *Neapolis*, was Greek in language and manners, and to give evidence that he ruled justly and considerately all the citizens of his empire. He requested the Greeks and the Romans to exchange their clothing and to speak each other's language; he watched the ephebic games in the sporting ground, their banquet and the following riotous sports during which the Capri youths, despite the emperor's presence, did not refrain from throwing fruit and dishes about. Finally Suetonius records the jokes and the witticisms Augustus uttered during the passage

1) Svet., *Vita Aug.*, 98: " Tunc Campaniae ora proximisque insulis circuitis, Caprearum quoque secessui quadriduum impendit, remississimo ad otium et ad omnem comitatem animo.

Forte Puteolanum sinum praetervehenti vectores nautaeque de navi Alexandrina, quae tantum quod appulerat, candidati coronatique et tura libantes fausta omina et eximias laudes congesserant, per illum se vivere, per illum navigare, libertate atque fortunas per illum frui. Qua re admodum exhilaratus, quadragenos aureos comitibus divisit iusque iurandum et cautionem exegit a singulis, non alio datam summam quam in emptionem Alexandrinarum mercium absumpturos. Sed et ceteros continuos dies inter varia munuscula togas insuper ac pallea distribuit, lege proposita ut Romani graeco, Graeci romano habitu et sermone uterentur. Spectavit assidue exercentes ephebos, quorum aliqua adhuc copia ex vetere instituto Capreis erat; isdem etiam epulum in conspectu suo praebuit, permissa, immo exacta iocandi licentia diripiendique pomorum et obsoniorum rerumque missilia. Nullo denique genere hilaritatis abstinuit.

Vicinam Capreis insulam Apragópolim appellabat, a desidia secedentium illuc e comitatu suo. Sed ex dilectis unum Masgaban nomine, quasi conditorem insulae, *κτιστήν* vocare consuerat. Huius Masgabae ante annum defuncti tumulum cum e triclinio animadvertisset magna turba multisque luminibus frequentari, versum compositum ex tempore clare pronuntiavit:

κτιστοῦ δέ τύμβον εἰσορῶ πυρούμενον

(The founder's pire I see alight)

conversusque ad Thrasylum Tiberii comitem, contra accubantem et ignarum rei, interrogavit cuiusnam poetae putaret esse; quo haesitante, subiecit alium:

Ὀφᾷς φάεσσι Μασγάβαν τιμώμενον;

(Do you see Masgaba honoured with lights?)

ac de hoc quoque consuluit. Cum ille nihil aliud responderet quam, cuiuscumque essent, optimos esse, cachinnum sustulit atque in iocos effusus est „.

and during his stay at Capri, which were all expressed in Greek so as to show that he was able to season his irony with Attic salt and to fashion Greek verse. While still sailing towards Capri and in sight of the island, in order to tease goodnaturedly those who had turned the beautiful island into an oasis of enjoyment, he invented a city called *Apragópolis*, the city of *dolce far niente*, and gave this Aristophanian name to the whole island or to a section of it. [1] He asked his followers to a banquet in a villa overlooking the sea and from up there, at night, while the flames were lit for the funeral rite on his freedman *Màsgaba's* tomb which was built on a rock amid the sea, [2] he composed, in accordance with the Greek convivial rule, two lines of heroic verse in honour of that man who had been the first founder and manager of the imperial estate of Capri. He jokingly asked, the Greek Thrasillus, the most learned among his guests, who the author of those lines was, and seeing Thrasillus' embarassment, for he had been caught unawares by that deceptive query, the poet-emperor burst into joyous mocking laughter. And it so happened that Tiberius, should sit gloomy and silent at that feast and watch those last merry hours that Augustus enjoyed at Capri. By the side of Tiberius was his trusted Thrasillus, a Greek astrologer who shared his exile at Rhodes and was later to be his devoted and loyal adviser during his longer and voluntary exile at Capri. A few days later, Augustus having died at Nola (in August of 14 a. D.) Tiberius, thanks to Livia's skilful devices, was to inherit the empire and with it the predilection Augustus had felt for Capri.

If Augustus loved Capri with a serene and restful affection, old and misanthropic Tiberius was its gloomy and jealous lover, so much so as to shut himself there in voluntary exile for ten years and to foster, thanks to that love of his and his bitter relish for exile and silence, the myth of Tiberius, the legends about his reputed secret voluptuousness and cruelty, which, having

1) The text reads: *vicinam Capreis insulam*, and since, apart from some rocks, there is no other island near Capri in which an Apragópolis might be located, the most obvious suggestion is that Augustus referred to Anacapri, that, being then cut off from the rest of the island, could be considered a separate island.

2) In order to explain the scene Suetonius describes, it is necessary to imagine that the banquet took place in one of the villas on the southern side of the island (Unghia marina or Tragàra) whence the Scoglio del Monacone could be discerned, the only place on which Màsgaba's tomb could stand. Actually there are traces on this rock of a rectangular basin that seems rather suited to the salting of fish than for a tomb, but the great waves which rush over the back of the Monacone when the south-eastern storms blow, certainly showed no mercy for the tomb of the founder of Capri's Apragópolis.

been fanned by Tacitus and Suetonius, still haunt the ruins of the Roman palaces and villas in Capri. Undoubtedly those legends reflect the spirit of anti–Caesarean opposition which was restrained by the prestige and the authority of Augustus and violently exploded at the time of his successor, but they also echo the malicious gossip of Rome's political circles, and the spitefulness of people who felt themselves ruled by agents and ministers who were ambitious and violent; much rather than being the result of an objective consideration of the true causes and circumstances which may have justified, if only partly, the voluntary abandonment of the natural seat of the empire. But the shameful accounts of the secret life of Tiberius at Capri, owing to which Tacitus and Suetonius appear to condemn irreclaimably the achievements of a great emperor, are by no means endorsed by all scholars, and not a few of them and not among the least authorative ones, discriminating between historical sources and anecdotes, between political opposition and slander, pronounce a more equitable judgment on Tiberius and on his rule during his ten years in Capri.

Tiberius, when already sixtyseven years old, was induced through particular circumstances and by a peculiar condition of his mind and of his nature, to leave the palace of the Caesars on the Palatine and to choose the island of Capri as the place where to spend the last ten years of his life and of his rule (between the years 27 and 37 a. D.). If the long reign of Augustus was embittered by losses, and by the licentious living and the quarrels of princes and imperial women, the adversities met by Tiberius were such as to threaten the very existence of the empire; and the close, silent and diffident character of the emperor was not such as to win him popular favour. His friction with Livia; his ambitious mother's excessively heavy exactions from him, who based them on her claim to have secured him the throne; the still mysterious death of Drusus, his only son; the bitter feud started by Agrippina, Germanicus' widow, with Seianus, the servility and the ill–concealed grudges of many people and the fear of plots, must have induced Tiberius to listen to the certainly not disinterested advice Seianus gave him to evade from the cares and dangers of residing in Rome by taking shelter in Capri. The dramatic account given by Tacitus (*Ann.*, IV, 67) of the emperor's flight towards his refuge in Capri is superb. During the year 27 Tiberius, after performing some sacred ceremonies in Campania, having ordered by an edict that no one should trouble him, and having surrounded himself with a strong bodyguard to keep at a distance the inhabitants who turned up in crowds wherever he passed, avoiding every contact with the municipalities, the colonies and the town-

ships of the mainland, hid himself in Capri like a wild beast in its lair: *Capreas se insulam abdidit, trium milium freto ab extremis Surrentini promunturii diiunctam.* It reads like the flight of Orestes pursued by the Furies. And Tacitus gave a psychologically human explanation of this flight, before he pronounced his moral condemnation of the prince. " *Solitudinem eius placuisse crediderim, quoniam importuosam circa mare et vix modicis navigiis pauca subsidia; neque adpulerit quisquam nisi gnaro custode* ,,. The joyous picture of the island, however, stands in contrast with that already tragic figure of an exile: " *Caeli temperies hieme mitis obiectu montis quo saeva ventorum arcentur; aestas in favonium obversa et aperto circum pelago peramoena; prospectabatque pulcherrimum sinum, antequam Vesuvius mons ardescens faciem loci verteret* ,,; so that even the gulf of Naples is shown as tragically changed by the eruption of Vesuvius!

Suetonius describes Tiberius' arrival in Capri (*Vita Tib.*, 40) in no tragic tone but with no less vivid colours: " *Peragrata Campania Capreas se contulit, praecipue delectatus insula, quod uno parvoque littore adiretur saepta undique praeruptis immensae altitudinis rupibus et profundo mari* ,,.

It was perhaps an act of temporary weakness when faced by the troublous raging of passions, a political miscalculation, a deeply human spiritual crisis, but not a withdrawal from the struggle and from the heavy burden of the empire, for Tiberius, despite the charges of licentiousness and idleness, never thought of creating in Capri that *Apragópolis* the subtle wit of Augustus had invented, and keeping contact with Rome by means of signalling towers and by a service of messengers working with the fleet at Misenum, never renounced the supreme functions of a head of state. In his remote refuge the old emperor remained the inflexible guardian of the safety of the empire and when, by the secret messages of his faithful Antonia, he was informed that Seianus, besides ruling and savaging Rome in his name, was also plotting against him in order to seize the throne, Tiberius recovered the fearful energy of an old general, fully capable of conquering and taming a rebellious army, and while remaining in Capri, he succeeded in parrying the grievous menace by firm orders and cold courage, and in bringing Seianus and his supporters to ruin (31 a. D.).

But his triumph over Seianus and the opposition party which had plotted against him in the Senate and in the very palace of the Caesars, was not enough to relieve the emperor's mind and to induce him to return to Rome. When Apicata, the unhappy widow of Seianus in order to avenge her husband and her sons who had been put to death, made the atrocious revelation that Drusus, the emperor's son, had died of poison with the complicity

of Livilla his own wife, Tiberius only isolated himself within the walls of his villa, in a voluntary and despairing seclusion for nine months and allowed the persecution of the followers of Seianus in Rome to degenerate into an orgy of blood and revenge. Prosecutions, delations, exiles, suicides and massacres made it a period of terror, to which, according to the prosecuting historians (Tacitus and Suetonius), Tiberius reacted by a more exasperated lust for licence and a tragic irresolution; on account of which, while he advanced almost to the very gates of Rome, as far as Tusculum on the Albanian hills and as far as Antium to attend the marriage of his nephew Caius and pretended to yield to the calls of the Senate, he was finally drawn back to his Capri exile. A voice of gloomy despair seems to break from him in his anguished condition when we read the beginning of a letter he wrote in year 32 to the Senate from Capri in defence of Messalinus Cotta who had been accused of lese-majesty: " *dii me deaeque peius perdant quam perire me cotidie sentio* „ — " may the gods and goddesses bring me to a more cruel end, than I feel daily to suffer „.

To render the emperor's loneliness more desolate, besides a series of severe sentences and deaths, there supervened the suicidal folly of the most loyal companion he had in his exile: that wise old man, Cocceius Nerva, a famous jurist and the only senator who had agreed to follow Tiberius to Capri, starved himself to death (a. D. 34) refusing to yield to the affectionate pleading of his imperial friend. He meant, perhaps, his death to be a silent protest against the juridical upheaval the latest sentences had caused by disregarding those formal rules of law which, on the contrary, had been diligently observed even during the period of the repression against Seianus. Or was Cocceius Nerva himself a victim to the oppressive atmosphere which, by then, surrounded Tiberius?

A financial crisis, the outbreak of war with the Parthians, a fire which consumed a whole quarter of Rome on the Aventine helped to reclaim Tiberius from this dismal condition by summoning him to attend to the urgent and heavy duties of a ruler. And while he arranged to send to the east a governor who was fit to deal with and control the perilous Parthian situation, he turned his mind to providing for a successor, and he called to Capri both his grandson and his nephew; the son of Drusus, who bore his own name Tiberius (Geminus), and Caius (Caligula), the son of Germanicus. Caius, being a slightly older young man, was preferred by the emperor and also, less disinterestedly by the new prefect, Mucro. By personally presiding in Capri at the ceremony in which Caius was invested with the *toga virilis* by the ritual *depositio barbae,* Tiberius certainly meant

to give solemn proof, during a family religious celebration, of the protection he assumed of this last survivor of the unhappy and persecuted family of Germanicus.

Perhaps already during the first year of his residence in Capri Tiberius was acquainted among other news from the east with the prosecution and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. According to a tradition reported by Tertullian, the great Christian apologist, the emperor who inclined towards the mysticism of eastern creeds, did not conceal his wish that the followers of the new religion should be treated with toleration.

The old emperor did not die in Capri. During one of his fleeting excursions along the shores of Campania and Latium, he was overtaken by illness. Hoping to be able to reach Capri, he stopped at Misenum and the stormy sea along with the growing seriousness of his condition prevented him from sailing. He died at Misenum in the villa of Lucullus seventy eight years old after having, by his wish, attended his last meal and having greeted his fellow-guests standing in the centre of the *triclinium* according to the custom of Roman patricians (March 16th 37 a. D.). Tacitus chose instead to make him die a tyrant's death smothered during his agony by order of Mucro, the prefect (*Ann.*, VI, 50), while terrified Caligula waited in a nearby room for the news of his death.

After the death of Tiberius Capri still enjoyed some flashes of life up to the age of the Flavian emperors, and the restoration of the Torre del Faro at *Villa Jovis*, the lighthouse Statius saw shining in the darkness of night (*Silvae*, III, 5, 100) was ordered by Domitianus or, perhaps, by one of his predecessors. But henceforward Capri, once an imperial residence, was to decline to a far less prominent task becoming the place where important courtiers were exiled. The last event connected with the ancient world was due to the emperor Commodus who in 182 a. D. sent Lucilla his sister, and Crispina, his wife, to Capri in exile. In 1750, presumably by the old lighthouse, a leaden pipe was found with an inscription naming the emperor M. Aurelius and this may confirm that a part of the imperial villas was still used in the age of the Antonini emperors.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

The inscriptions so far discovered in Capri are too few to give us a clear idea of the administrative organization that Augustus and Tiberius instituted in Capri when, from being dependent on Naples, it became an imperial estate. No doubt the

upkeep and the caretaking of the residential villas, the farming of the land and the gathering of products were entrusted to the usual crew of freedmen and slaves under the rule of a *procurator Caesaris Augusti*, as may be inferred from the mention of a few *vernae caprenses* or *capretani* in the inscriptions of a cemetery destined to the slaves of one of the grand imperial villas in Sorrento or elsewhere.

But besides this managing, directing and working personnel, there were other particular bodies which more directly concerned the functioning of the government in as much as they provided for regular communications with Rome. One of these services was centred on the lighthouse: the lofty Torre del Faro at *Villa Jovis* transmitted and received more or less important news by smoke signals during the day and by light signals during the night, communicating with the lighthouse at Cape Athenaeum on the Sorrento peninsula and with the lighthouse of the harbour of Misenum. From an inscription dedicated to a certain *Q. Ofellius specular(ius)* by a guild of *sodales* we learn that, as at all events could have easily been imagined, there was in Capri a body of look-out-men or signallers who carried out the most delicate service Tiberius must have established to ensure the working of the government and his own personal safety: namely the correct sighting and interpreting of the conventional signs that the *speculae* on the mainland transmitted to the *specula* in Capri. The existence of this service explains a passage in Suetonius (*Vita Tiberii*, 65) where, during the anxious hours while the Seianus' plot was being suppressed, the emperor himself is shown in the act of watching from the top of his villa (*speculabundus ex altissima rupe*) for the signals which were either to announce the success of the repression, or, should the suppression have failed, warn him to take shelter in the ships that were kept ready to sail from the island.

THE ANCIENT HARBOUR

Both Tacitus and Suetonius explicitly suggest that Capri had no natural harbour and that this was one of the reason on account of which it was chosen by so diffident and suspicious a man as Tiberius. It pleased the emperor not only because a landfall could only be made on one small beach (Svet., *Tib.* 40: *Capreas se contulit, praecipue delectatus insula, quod uno parvoque litore adiretur*), but also because the island was almost surrounded and protected by the unsurmountable wall of its rocks and its deep sea (*saepta undique praeruptis immensae altitudinis mon-*

tibus et profundo mari); and Tacitus for his part using a more sailor like terminology wrote (*Ann.*, IV, 67): *vix modicis navigiis pauca subsidia*: " there were only a few shelters for small ships ,,.

But his long residence, the requirements of government and the need of keeping in touch with the fleet at Misenum, forced even Tiberius to restrain his excessive romantic exclusiveness; and a harbour was built where there had merely been an accessible shore, at the " Grande Marina ,, , just where the present harbour of Capri is seen, with its somewhat smaller basin and the break-water more to the east. In fact the remains of the Roman harbour are still visible on the west just by *Punta Vivàra*, a location more immediately connected by land as well as by sea with the imperial villa of " Palazzo a Mare ,,; and because of this it may be supposed that the harbour was already built during the reign of Augustus, for whose brief visits a point was required where landing and anchoring should be safe.

So far as it was possible the Romans improved the natural landing facilities at Tragàra between the Faraglioni and the Monacone rock (*fig. 9*), at the Marina Piccola and at *Gràdola* for the sake of an access to the " Villa di Damecuta ,, (see p. 60).

THE WATER SUPPLY

The Romans who were skilled and daring in searching for water and in conveying it, were faced in Capri by a problem that is still troubling us to-day, that of supplying water to the island. The problem was rendered more urgent in as much as Capri was acquiring the character of an imperial resort; which meant an increasing population, great activity in building and exceptional requirements on the part of the imperial guests and their suites. And since, because of the geological formation of the soil (limestone), the water of the few and meagre sources reaches the sea either too heavily saturated with salts or already briny, the Romans were forced to treasure rain water by the most rational and efficient means providing wide collecting surfaces and capacious cisterns to contain it.

Owing to the different types of the villas, different solutions were adopted: and thus at *Villa Jovis* the cisterns were gathered together, communicated with the central body of the building and branched away from it like the arteries with the heart in a living organism; there were peripheral cisterns in a chain along the edge of the S. Michele hill; and separate cisterns isolated or in groups in the " Palazzo a Mare ,, villa that was also a park. Mostly these cisterns were carved into the rock and carefully

FIG. 9 — THE TRAGARA PORT AND THE MONACONE BOULDER

plastered with lime and crushed bricks so as to be made water-tight; they communicated with each other and were provided with separating walls in order to facilitate the utilization and distribution of the water; the larger and deeper ones also had sedimentation tanks and steps to allow for emptying and cleaning, and were always vaulted, the roof of the vault functioning as a collecting surface.

But besides providing the villas and the farms with cisterns, the Romans did not omit endowing the dwelling centre of Capri with a public reservoir in the quarter of *Soprafontana* or of *Marucello*; just below the watershed dividing the " Grande Marina „ from the " Piccola Marina „ , a place where the rain water drips rather more abundantly through the clayish soil and whence it could more easily be distributed to the houses and the buildings of the Marina. In order to collect that precious, though meagre vein of water, as early as during the age of Augustus, the Romans built a great reservoir measuring 60 m. in length and more than 30 m. in width, which was divided into several cisterns, one of which is still intact, while the others have crumbled because of the subsiding of the ground. The existence of a true decantation and sedimentation tank shows

the care taken in cleansing the water which was too heavily loaded with salts and clay matter. The cisterns of *Soprafontana* having been abandoned crumbled during the middle ages and have filled with a thick and viscous layer of water–borne clay, that was wrongly taken to be a store for making precious earthen wares and of pretended murrha vases.

A more daring but fruitless attempt was made by the Romans in the Blue Grotto by boring an explorative hole through the rocks of the mountain with the hope of catching some sweet water vein in the fissures of the clay rocks before it mixed with the water of the sea (see *Grotta Azzurra*).

At all events, since it is unthinkable that the Romans periodically carried water to Capri from the copious sources of Stabia (Castellammare) or from the aqueduct of Naples, it is presumable that in their days the watering conditions were better than they are now and that the Romans were more successful in exploiting the few natural springs and the rain water.

IMPERIAL MONUMENTS IN CAPRI

THE VILLAS

Capri's archaelogy is mainly concerned with discovering and identifying the twelve villas in which, according to Tacitus (*Ann.*, IV, 67) Tiberius appears to have established himself dedicating them to the several deities of Olympus " *tum Tiberius duodecim villarum numinibus et molibus insederat* (" in those days had taken his seat [in Capri] amid the deities and the structures of twelve villas „). [1] Apart from the scarcely dissembled charge of unrestrained luxuriousness and Epicurean self-indulgence that transpires from Tacitus' account, since there was no Roman patrician and wealthy man who did not own several villas suited for residence during the different seasons, it was but natural that an emperor should seek the most comfortable conditions for a prolonged residence in an island that is exposed to the winds, to winter storms and to the changes of a sea climate: the coolness of woods and winds on the side towards the north and the west between the plateau of " Palazzo a Mare „, the Castiglione hill and the level ground of Damecuta, sun warmth and shelter from the northern winds in the little valley between Mount Solaro and Tragàra.

But twelve villas, even in a beautiful island and varied in its beauty, seem too many and perhaps some concern with round figures induced Tacitus to mistake for imperial resorts also modest structures of *villae rusticae* and *villae fructuariae* in which dwelled the freedmen farmers and the managers of the *patrimonium principis*. Finally Tacitus, by focussing his attention on Tiberius, overlooked the share that Augustus first had in transforming the structure and architecture of Greek Capri into Roman Capri. At any rate we are indebted to some nineteenth century Capri scholars for stringing together, with much good will and no little imagination, the golden wreath of the twelve villas credited to Augustus and Tiberius. It may be worth while to list them according to the series proposed by that worthy man, Rosario Mangoni: I - S. Maria del Soccorso or Villa Jovis; II - Villa del Tuoro grande or of Tragàra; III - Villa d'Unghia Marina; IV -

1) I adopt the reading *numinibus* for *nominibus* as I have suggested elsewhere.

Villa del Colle S. Michele; V – Villa del Castiglione; VI – Villa del Truglio at the Marina Grande; VII – Villa di Aiano; VIII – Palazzo a Mare; IX – Villa di Capodimonte (now Villa Munthe al S. Michele); X – Villa di Timberino; XI – Villa di Monticello; XII – Villa di Damecuta.

But amid this galaxy of villas that have been more or less unmethodically searched and sacked during the earlier excavation of the eighteenth and of the nineteenth centuries, three still survive and excel because of the grandeur of their structure and the extension of their area: that which with its Olympian name of *Villa Jovis* (the only ancient name mentioned by Suetonius) crowns the top of the eastern promontory (*Monte Tiberio*) as if it were a natural fortress and *Capitolium* of the island; the second on the *Damecuta* plateau, where the Anacapri highland sloping down by terraces of olive trees and carobs, widens out and comes to rest along the shore at the feet of Mount Solaro; and third, that which amid a grove of holm oaks caressed by the north–western breeze from the level ground of "Palazzo a Mare„ stretches down to the so–called "Baths of Tiberius„ that is the seaside section of the vast structure of the villa. Three villas then, standing at three different altitudes; one high up on a mountain (334 m.); one midway on a plateau (150 m.) and one on the shore of the sea, as if they were three rows in the pit of a theatre having the gulf of Naples as its background.

Of another great villa standing on the northern slope of the Castiglione hill we have nothing more than the account an Austrian gentleman, Norbert Hadrawa gave of the excavations he carried out during several periods between 1786 and 1790 which he described himself in a curious book *Ragguagli di vari scavi e scoperte di antichità fatte nell'isola di Capri e dal medesimo comunicati per lettere ad un suo amico di Vienna*, Napoli, 1793. He found five rooms with stuccoes, paintings and mosaics; one of the rooms was certainly used for bathing. Hadrawa rather exaggerated the worth of the things he found; one of them a floor of inlaid marble remains; it was given an elyptical shape and taken firstly to the Villa della Favorita at Resína and finally to the Capodimonte Palace in Naples with a curious inscription ascribing its design to Thrasillus the astrologer and soothsayer.

Also the traces of the other villas of Unghia Marina and of Monte Tuoro (Tragàra) on the southern side of Capri and of Villa di Tiberino and Villa del Pozzo on the western side of Anacapri are scarce.

VILLA JOVIS [1]

It is the largest of the Capri imperial villas and the one that, because of its peculiar location, its massive structure as a citadel commanding the deep and narrow straits of the "Bocche di Capri,, from the high crags of the eastern promontory, expresses a will to power and a need for defense and not only the wish for repose and a relaxed mode of living. It is also by excellence *the* villa of Tiberius, not only because it expresses Tiberius' gloomy and recluse character, his bitter relish for solitude, and his detachment from all ordinary contacts with men, but also because it received the emperor in the most dramatic moments of his voluntary exile and shared with him the tragic hours of his betrayal and of his relentless firmness in defending himself and the empire.

The excavations. During the Bourbon period *Villa Jovis* shared the same sad vicissitudes of depredations with the other imperial villas in the island; it was sacked by occasional archaeologists, despoiled already during the days of Charles de Bourbon of its most valuable floors of inlaid marble (one of them, perhaps taken from the imperial *triclinium* forms the floor in front of the high altar in Capri's cathedral) and mishandled by local landowners. One excavation only was regularly authorized and carried out by a worthy scholar of the place Giuseppe Feola, in 1827; but although his labours brought to light some fine works of art (see p. 88), they were limited to a section of the upper floor and lasted only a few months. The excavation was resumed over a century later, in 1932, and was completed during

1) Some recent scholars have again suggested to go back to the reading *Jonis* as the manuscript tradition of Suetonius has it, in preference to the obvious correction of *Jonis* into *Jovis* that was accepted by the Renaissance scholars and almost unanimously by recent editors and students. Bubbe, in order to defend the reading of the manuscript, suggested (1926) that the villa was called *Jonis* on account of a picture illustrating the myth of *Io*. But apart from the fact that a picture representing the myth of *Io* was in Livia's House on the Palatine and recurred in several houses of Pompeii, and therefore should have been the work of the Hellenistic painter himself to whom the original picture is ascribed in order to deserve the honour to give its name to Tiberius' imperial residence in Capri, it is to be noted that the very number of twelve villas Tiberius is reputed to have owned necessarily suggests that the villas were named after as many deities of Olympus, and that Jupiter's name must have actually designated the villa that, like the *arx* of the *Capitolium* commanded and excelled the other imperial residences in the island. In point of fact Pliny, *N. H.*, III, 6) appears not to mention a villa, but an actual *arx* as the residence of Tiberius: *Mox a Surrento octo millibus passuum distantes Tiberii principis arce nobilis Capreae...*

successive phases of work in 1935; and these recent excavations, if not so favoured by luck as to reclaim more works of art from ruins that had been searched again and again, may be praised above all because they had the merit of bringing completely to light, to settle and to render accessible, one of the most characteristic and impressive examples of joined villa and residential palace that have survived from the first age of the empire, and thus the most complete and important monument of Roman Capri.

The excavation has in fact uncovered so vast and organic a structure as had not been revealed by the inadequate plans drawn by Neapolitan scholars and such as could not appear from a simple land survey of the ground. Besides, the excavations show a rationally conceived structure that Weichardt's excessively theatrical reconstruction (*fig. 10*) had grievously and substantially falsified. Thus Tiberius, who was not famed as a great builder and who was charged with being too miserly in public works, [1] gave evidence here of an organically conceived structural and architectural activity that cannot but be ascribed to his personal taste and to a deliberately intentional planning. It would have been easy in building here an imperial residence to turn out a work of theatrical architecture and superfluous showiness; we meet, on the contrary, with the austere solidity of a castle gripped to the rocks, as a hermitage of solitude and a fortress of defence.

The whole summit of the mountain is occupied by the central body of the villa and its depending accessories; the uncovered structures occupy an area of over 7000 sq. m., but the actual extent of the villa comprising woods, gardens and *nymphaea*, resting *exedrae* and rocky paths, and which no doubt possessed a zone of protection and safeguard, must have been much greater (*fig. 11*).

The rocky, steep and uneven nature of the mountain forced the builder to group together the body of the structures and to take advantage of the different levels of the ground in order to obtain by successive terraces an upward extension that could not be secured on the level. From the " Torre del Faro „ that rises all alone in a little saddle of the summit so as to be visible from both sides of the mountain (297 m.), the rocky slope climbs steeply to the top where the " Chiesetta della Madonna del Soc-

1) Svetonius, *Vita Tib.*, 47: " *Princeps neque opera ulla magnifica fecit (nam et quae sola susceperat, Augusti templum restitutionemque Pompeiani theatri, imperfecta post tot annos reliquit), neque spectacula omnino edidit...* „. — " As a prince he neither built any great work (for after so many years he left unfinished the only ones he had begun, the Temple of Augustus and the Theatre in Pompeii), nor did he ever order public shows... „.

FIG. 10 — WEICHARDT'S ROMANTIC VIEW OF VILLA JOVIS

FIG. 11 – VILLA JOVIS – THE PARK

corso ,, now stands, which was formerly a terrace of the belvedere (334 m.). There are thus about forty metres in height that the structures of the villa must have covered, rising by terraces and ledges, flattening and levelling and filling with embankments and concrete castings the unevenness of the rocks or scooping out the hard stone so as to give unity, practicality and convenient internal and external communications to the imperial building. It would almost seem as if the architect and his august inspirer had chosen to challenge precipice and abyss: on the east the palace walls enclose the edge of the rocks which look down sheer on the sea from a height of 300 metres (*fig. 12*); on the northern side, beyond a steep passage, the building stops on the edge of yet another precipice in an airy belvedere loggia; on the western and southern sides the view is less dizzy and extends towards the central part of the island, towards the Marina harbour, the slope of Mount Solaro and to the other imperial villas all around, those of the Castiglione and S. Michele hills and of the Palazzo a Mare (*fig. 13*). It was precisely on this side that the Villa was supported by massive pillars and arches and its buildings being arranged on several storeys, reached its highest elevation; on the western side three

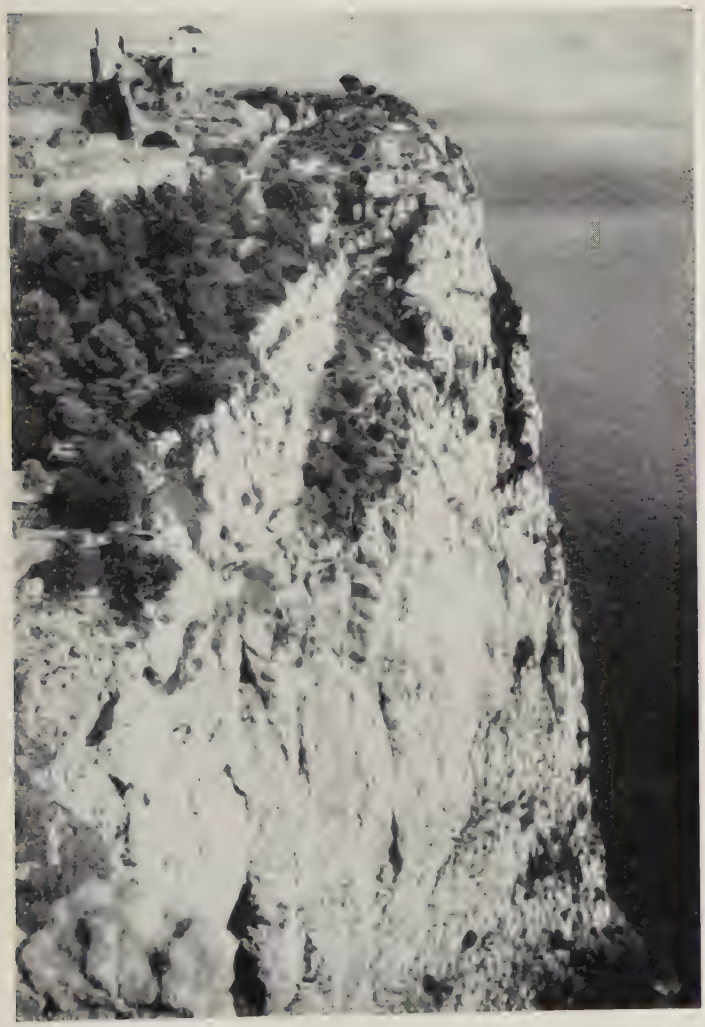

FIG. 12 – VILLA JOVIS AND THE JUMP FROM THE ROCK

FIG. 13 – THE VIEW ON THE MARINA FROM VILLA JOVIS

storeys are still preserved and at least a fourth must have existed. This is far from the hyperbolic height Weichardt ascribed to the vertical development of the building, nevertheless it is among the most notable elevations shown in Roman palace buildings of the first imperial period.

Also some amusing anecdotes which were told about the secret life Tiberius led in Capri give relevance to the rocky features of the villa which had become the emperor's residence. The story ran (SVET., *Vita Tib.*, 60) that a few days after Tiberius had reached Capri, while he sat alone in a secluded spot enjoying the solitude he longed for, a fisherman, adroitly eluding the watchful palace guards, had succeded in penetrating into the enclosure of the villa by scaling inaccessible rocks and walls and had offered an exceptionally large red mullet (*mullus*) to the emperor; who being stricken with terror by the daring of the climber who had succeeded in violating so impenetrable a fortress, ordered the foolhardy man to be punished by rubbing the scaly fish on his face. And as the fisherman, upon listening to this callous order had congratulated himself upon having offered the red mullet to the emperor instead of the lobster he had kept in his canvas bag, Tiberius, on learning this, ordered that also the lobster should be used to tear up the fisherman's face. Whether the story be true or legendary, this climbing fisherman fits excellently into the inaccessible rocks of *Villa Jovis*.

Let us have a look at the general plan of the villa (*fig. 14*). The main buildings of the Palace comprise a vast square in the middle of which are four large cisterns deeply scooped out of the rock, each of them was subdivided into two or four com-

FIG. 15 VILLA JOVIS — CISTERN

municating compartments, and was covered by a vault; the vaults are now crumbled for the most part, but they were originally intended to collect the rain water falling on their upper side and on the surrounding roofs (*fig. 15*). It was a necessary device to render life possible in a building erected on the top of a mountain and having no other possibility to secure a supply of water; and the Roman architect did not hesitate to set aside over a half of the area of the *domus* to provide for this essential need. Furthermore, by placing the cisterns in the centre of the building, the architect was giving the water supply an actually vital function in the body of the Villa. Weichardt was therefore wrong in his reconstruction when he placed the emperor's residential quarters on top of the vaulted cisterns: for, apart from the fact that no remains of buildings are to be found above the cisterns, it is necessary to allow the central nucleus of the Palace its simplest, but most important function as a collecting surface for rain water, as the original architect did.

Thus the several quarters of the Villa appear to be naturally and rationally arranged around the central square of the cisterns; and keeping to a rectangular pattern, they extend towards the east with a semi-circular structure which leans against the rocks and is lengthened out towards the north into a large terrace intended for walks and sightseeing. Furthermore, the elevation of the building, the strong irregularities and the different levels of the rocky ground and the particular requirements of an imperial residence, of an emperor, moreover, gloomy and recluse as Tiberius was, all these considerations forced the architect to pay particular attention to the planning of the internal communications between the several parts of the building, keeping the service stairs, corridors and passages separate from those reserved to the emperor and his retinue.

Description

Entrance. The principal entrance of the Palace is reached by walking up a ramp starting from the avenue of Myrtles (*fig. 16*).

This ramp still retains some of its original paving in *opus spicatum* (small bricks in a fishbone arrangement) over a sound foundation of crushed bricks; but this road goes on under the present day avenue towards the valley lower down covered with olive trees; providing clear evidence that, originally, the Villa was reached not by the path running below the Astarita park and the " Torre del Faro ,, , but directly, in so far at least

FIG. 16 — VILLA JOVIS — THE RAMP LEADING TO THE ENTRANCE, & THE ENTRANCE AND THE LIGHTHOUSE TOWER

as the emperor and his retinue were concerned, from the bottom of the valley by the houses of the *Moneta* section, so that in climbing the whole vast Palace was seen in all its grandeur.

Midway between the entrance to the Palace and the " Torre del Faro „ there is a rock pointed out as the " *Salto di Tiberio* „ , from which Tiberius is reputed to have caused men sentenced to death to be hurled down after subjecting them to long and exquisite tortures. Suetonius is the source of this information (*Vita Tib.*, 63): " *Carnificinae eius ostenditur locus Capreis, inde damnatos post longa et exquisita tor-*

menta praecipitari coram se in mare iubebat, excipiente classiariorum manu et contis atque remis elidente cadavera, ne cui residui spiritus quicquam inesset „. Quite apart from the fact that a similar cruel performance is ascribed, and even lass credibly, to Tiberius towards the soothsayers charged with imposture (see p. 53), at all events within the Palace and not outside, and that there occurred massacres in Rome during the period of terror when the repression against Seianus was raging and when corpses were cast into the Tiber, it seems very unlikely that Tiberius, overlooking the formal procedure of such prosecutions and foregoing the dissimulation with which Tacitus charges him, should turn himself into the executioner of capital punishments. Such prosecutions and death sentences as took place in Capri were due to the customary informing against traitors and spies, that could not fail to occur among the slaves, the freedmen and the praetorian soldiers concerned with the administration and the civilian and military services in the island. 1)

The imposing bulk that rises by degrees along the rocks facing the Marina Grande of Capri is formed by a massive buttressing wall with arches and pillars that was raised at the back of the higher section of the structure; similarly along the southern frontage a twofold wall lining with pillars and arches surrounds the rectangular and apsed rooms of the quarter where the B a t h is; traces of white stucco visible here show that the huge bulk was coated with white plaster so as to stand out more clearly against the green foliage of the park which surrounded it on all sides.

The ramp leads to the *vestibule* which has the shape of a four-columned hall, and four white marble socles show where the four columns of cipolin marble stood; this marble was preferred for most of the buildings of Tiberius. Facing the threshold of the wide entrance there is a rectangular niche in the wall in which there may have been placed a statue of either the god to whom the villa was dedicated or of the emperor. The rooms all round were turned into cisterns during the middle ages, but were originally intended for the guards.

The wide corridor, covered with white mosaic, slowly rises towards a second vestibule (*fig.* 17). Before the end of the ramp a room and a secondary corridor lead (on the right) to three vaulted rooms under the upper quarter of the B a t h ; despite the several changes which were made, the central room shows the typical pattern of a *calidarium* and probably this was the

1) Below the *Salto di Tiberio,* halfway down the rocky side facing the sea, there gapes the opening of a cave that is only accessible to rock climbers. By local tradition it is called G r o t t a d i T i b e r i o for it was reputed to possess a secret communication with the Palace which the emperor would have devised as an eventual way of escape towards the sea. But this is merely a modern legend grown around the old Tiberius' legends. The plants growing within the cave — some palms are supposed to be among them — have developed from seeds borne by the wind and birds.

FIG. 17 — VILLA JOVIS — THE FIRST RAMP OF THE PRINCIPAL CORRIDOR

only bath of the Villa before the great Bath was built on the floor above.

The upper vestibule is the actual centre of communications of the Palace. On the eastern side the principal corridor after a first ascending branch, reaches by a second winding branch with steps the upper floor of the Bath and of the living rooms; later the stairs were raised so as to reach up to the height of the more recent superstructures retaining the floor of the first ramp and the decorations of the side walls in the embankment of the filling. In the southeastern corner there is the indication of stairs leading to the (now destroyed) rooms, of the floor above the entrance. Finally by the northern wall fourteen steps of a service stair and a narrow dim passage led to the pantries and the kitchens (see p. 54).

Bath. – In a villa in which the emperor resided there could not fail to exist a bath for the emperor himself and his retinue; and consequently the whole southern side of the palace was set aside for a bath which was reached by a wide passage and immediately adjoined one of the four large cisterns that was to supply the water to it (*fig. 18*). Because of the diversity and the craftsmanship of the structure its building is presumably to be ascribed to a second phase of the Villa, still in the period of Tiberius, namely to a reconstruction or an enlargement, while the raising and the transformation of one of the corridor's ramps into a stair with steps was probably due to the need for an easier access from the principal entrance.

Although the *therma*, before the crumbling of its vault, was thoroughly stripped of all its decorations, of its mosaic floors, of the marble panelling of the basins, of the lower mouldings of the walls, and even of the little pillars pertaining to the *suspensurae*, there is to be recognized here an accuracy in planning and in practical operating as is not usually found in the baths of private dwellings and villas.

There is in fact a sequence of five rooms parallel to the principal passage of the palace and reached by a special entrance corridor and by a separate service corridor: the typical sections of a Roman bath are present.

The first room, partly destroyed, must have served as vestibule and *apodyterium*;

– the second, retaining traces of a marble coated bath sunk into the floor, which during the later reconstruction was reduced to a small rectangular basin, was used as *frigidarium*;

– the third, with its raised floor and a large bath resting against the inside wall of the northern side, answers to the typical plan of a *tepidarium*;

FIG. 18 – VILLA JOVIS – THE BATH AND A CISTERN

– the fourth is the *calidarium*; it has two apses, the deeper one on the southern side contained a large bath; the smaller apse on the north, housed the *labrum*, a bronze or marble ablution basin; the walls were vaulted by teated tiles;

– the fifth, *praefurnium*, is divided into two sections at a differnt level to provide for the lighting of the lower furnace under the *calidarium* bath and of the upper fire heating the *schola labri* of the *calidarium* and the basin of the *tepidarium*. From the place in front of the furnaces a few steps lead to a little room that must have been intended as a lodging for the *fornacator* and eventually as a store room for fire–wood.

The water was supplied by the nearest cistern passing through a reservoir the remains of which are clearly visible above the *fornacator's* room; a passage along the cistern, crossed by a deep drain debouching into the sea, must have been used to regulate the flow and distribution of the water to the several rooms of the bath and to the cauldrons of the *praefurnium*.

Dwelling quarters. By making use of the maximum elevation of the palace, the dwelling quarters of the service personnel and of the emperor's retinue, were arranged along the western side

FIG. 19 – VILLA JOVIS – THE WESTERN SIDE WITH LIVING ROOMS

towards the landscape of the island and the landing of " Marina Grande ,, (*fig. 19*). It was a vertical structure with several storeys, and rooms of an almost uniform size and almost monastically ranged along a corridor on each of the storeys. Above a row of store–rooms on the ground floor there still stand the side walls of nine rooms of the upper floor (in the central room a latrine was installed); there are also considerable remains of a second storey, and the existence of a third storey on the level of the service corridor along the cisterns is certainly to be presumed. While the store–rooms on the ground floor were vaulted, the

rooms on the upper storeys had simply timber ceilings, and the sockets for the beams are still discernible in the walls of the third floor corridor; in modern times the beams had to be replaced by concrete girders in order to re-establish a connexion between the several storeys. The uniform plan of the storeys and of the rooms which were arranged on each without any particular distinguishing sign suggests that the people of lower rank belonging to the emperor's retinue lived here along with the service personnel. This side of the palace has suffered most from wrecking and from the adaptations made during the middle ages and later for the defence of the island, when the lower store rooms were turned into cisterns wherewith to collect and distribute the rain water.

The imperial quarters. – The principal corridor running between the Bath and the southern cistern, leads by a wide stairway to the edge of the rocks, and thence by means of a ramp which has been completely demolished, it reached the imperial quarters situated on the highest part of the palace, and sharply separated from the living quarters on the western side. The imperial quarters comprised an official section and the private dwelling of the emperor.

As the connecting ramp between the quarter of the bath and the imperial section is now missing, the latter is reached from the quarter where the retinue lived. The doors preventing a free passage through the corridor and along the rooms on its sides clearly show that this section of the Palace was subject to particular surveillance.

The semicircular hall (the so-called *Nymphaeum*) (plan and *fig. 20*). It is a body of six rooms linked to a semi-circle, enclosed and almost boxed in between the wall of the great cisterns, the edge of the rock on the east along which the ramp develops which encircles the palace on this side, and the belvedere terrace of the Madonna Chapel. There are two large square halls flanked by two smaller rooms with a large rectangular hall in the centre and two little rooms ending at the bottom against an apsed wall partly leaning against, and partly following the side, of the mountain. The building appears to belong to two different epochs, at any rate different materials and different craftsmanships were employed, for the semicircular section is built in reticulated masonry of tufa quarried in Naples or the Campi Flegrei, with niches backed with bricks and remains of a painted plaster with a red moulding, the wall having a golden yellow background; the other rooms, on the contrary, are constructed in the usual way with uncertain craftsmanship in local

FIG. 20 — VILLA JOVIS — THE SEMICIRCULAR HALL

stone divided by regular brick rows. It is at all events obvious that in order to transform the extreme summit of the mountain, which was decidedly small and bristling with peaks, into a level plane on which the semicircle was to be erected, a stupendous work of cutting, levelling and filling was required which is still to be discerned where the rock is in some part visible and where the floor of some rooms has subsided. Thus, considering that the main corridor ends in these rooms that are organically connected by the semicircular hall, and that they are situated upon the highest and almost level part of the building; finally, that the Palace had no larger rooms in its central nucleus, it becomes necessary to attribute a representative and official function to this quarter; furthermore, because of its being enclosed and almost shut in between the mountain and the cisterns, it could not possess any purpose or possibilities for land- and seascaping.

Its plan is peculiar and difficult to reconstruct in its architectural form and to envisage in its practical function, because during the excavations of 1826, the crumbling vaults and the precious elements of the higher structures were destroyed. It is scarcely convincing to call this section *Nymphaeum* as is usually

done on the ground of its apse and semicircle, for even though it might have been supplied with water from the old cistern below the Chapel, none of the arrangements are there that are to be found in the other rock-built Nymphaea of the island (see Caves - Nymphaea p. 76); and it is still less likely that it was a theatre. It appears much more probable to suggest that the official functions took place in this section which was not far removed from the emperor's living quarters: there must have been here the *Aula* for official functions and the rooms of the imperial chancery; and there may have stood in the centre of the semicircle the statues of a deity and of Augustus to whom Tiberius did not fail to pay honour as to the founder of the empire (see further on). Two bronze well-heads and the relief of the cavalcade (see p. 88) were gathered here out of the ruins during the 1826 excavations.

The imperial living quarters. – Along the corridor towards the west a short branch of it, on the right, immediately leads to the emperor's living quarters. Before the recent excavations a super-imposed stair connected it with the little Church of the Madonna above. It is a small apartment of no more than three rooms, quite separate from all the rest of the Palace, leaning against, and protected by, the highest rocky peak of the mountain on the east, and looking down on the north and the west upon the panorama of the island and of the sea. The rooms by the side of the last section of the stair and of the vestibule (see plan) give evidence of the care with which that access and those passages were particularly guarded. The actual living quarters comprise a raised entrance vestibule (with a small room hammered out of the rock) and two rooms, one of which opens on the vestibule; these rooms have spacious windows opening in groups of two along the inside passages. Few remains of the fine floors made with inlaid polychrome marble give evidence of the particular distinction of these rooms. A piece of level ground surrounded by low walls in front of the vestibule appears to have been a belvedere terrace, originally sheltered by a shed, rather than a room. But the real belvedere of this corner of the Palace was provided by the rocky terrace above, on which, during the middle ages was raised a Chapel consecrated to St. Leonard (later to S. Maria del Soccorso), a terrace which must have been reserved to the emperor. It is the natural observatory of the Villa looking upon the eastern side of the island, and on the gulfs of Naples and of Salerno. From his living rooms the emperor could easily pass either to the *Aula* and the offices of the Chancery or descend along the corridor as far as the Loggia of the *ambulatio* and of the summer *triclinium*.

The imperial Loggia. – Descending along the great corridor of the Palace from the living quarters of the emperor, a row of steps, a steeply inclined ramp, originally covered by a vault, and sunk in to the rock and finally a row of limestone steps lead to the Loggia of the emperor's *ambulatio* or *gestatio* (*fig. 21–22*). It is the most grandly conceived section of the Villa and, to modern as well as to ancient taste, would in itself alone justify the execution of so difficult and laborious a structure as the *Villa Jovis* indubitably was.

The Loggia leans against the northern side of the mountain and is raised more than twenty metres above the level of the central body of the buildings; it looks to the north on the gulf of Naples, and runs straight from west to east for a length of 92 metres namely one sixteenth of a Roman mile, so that, by walking along it, listening to the time announcements of the *nuncius horarum*, the emperor was able to take as much exercise as his strength allowed and dietetic rules advised. The ground levelling was obtained partly by cutting and partly by filling in the rock and, in order to reach the desired length, it was extended to the west above vaulted structures and sturdy supporting walls. At its eastern end the Loggia reaches out to an *exedra* which looks down on the sea along a sheer mountain wall 300 metres in height.

Along the extent of the Loggia, at equal distances from the two ends, there are two rectangular *exedrae* sunk into the wall towards the mountain: these were resting *exedrae* as may be clearly seen from the preserved bases on which the legs of the marble seats rested. On the mountain side it was protected by a simple parapet rather than a wall. It was not over two metres high, plastered with stucco and painted, and separated from the rocky mountain side by a channel that collected the water and discharged it into the sea so as not to damage the paving. It was not a wall supporting the pillars of a covered lobby, but a mere defensive parapet decorated with marble *hermae* and little garden statues, the sockets of whose pillars may still be seen and were set at even distances from one another. It was thus an open air *ambulatio, sub divo* such as was suited to a summer resort and was suggested by its northern exposition: a *solarium* suited to a summer *insulatio.*

The flooring of the *ambulatio* retains no trace of either mosaic work or of a marble covering; it is merely a thick and solid roadbed of rough mixture of crushed bricks and lime, such as was suited to an open air terrace exposed to the rain and the frost of winter time.

But the panorama that was and may still be enjoyed whether walking or resting in the *exedrae* from this aerial balcony, because

FIG. 21 – VILLA JOVIS – THE RAMP AND THE STEPS LEADING TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE IMPERIAL LOGGIA

of its right height and proper visual angle, may be said to gather together the grandest and most complete view of the island and of the gulf of Naples, such as Tacitus with the abandonment of an admirer and, apparently, a good deal of visual accuracy describes (*Ann.*, IV, 67): *aestas in favonium obversa et aperto circum pelago peramoena; prospectabatque pulcherrimum sinum...*

FIG. 22 – VILLA JOVIS – THE EMPEROR'S "AMBULATIO,,

The eastern half of the Loggia broadens out into actual residential quarters that were obtained by breaking into the rock for a depth of fifteen metres (see plan). There are two rooms the central one of which, altogether open on the panorama of the Loggia, is a large *triclinium* hall with a vaulted ceiling, the floor and the mouldings in coloured marble, as appears from the imprint which is left in the block of chalk on which it rested. By this hall is a resting *diaeta* with a large window opening on the terrace. On the opposite side is a more remote room accessible from two branches of the corridor, lighted by windows and also formerly possessing a precious polychrome marble flooring; it must have been one of the emperor's living rooms and he thus had another private apartment close to the *ambulatio* and the *triclinium*.

A double cistern further on provided a separate water supply independently of the central cisterns of the Villa.

The Marina Loggia (*SPECULARIUM?*). – On the western edge of the mountain in the direction of the " Marina Grande ,, of Capri there stands the central body of a massive structure

having enormously thick walls (up to 4 metres) and some dark vaulted rooms intended rather as under–structures than as dwelling rooms (*fig. 23*); there is also a narrow staircase leading from the level of the imperial *Loggia* to the " Avenue of Myrtles ,, along what may have originally been an avenue surrounding the Palace. The whole structure is of reticulated tufa with brick rows, but the thickness of the walls was obtained with a filling of chalk rubble that has been cracked by weather, but is still strong enough to retain its ancient function as a supporting wall. The soundness of the structure, even more than by the weather has been impaired by earthquakes which have caused the upper part of the building to crumble and to roll down the steep slope towards the sea, for, judging from the thickness of the main walls, it is necessary to suppose that the building rose much higher than it is at present.

The gigantic ruins, separate from the rest of the Villa, are not easily explained; rising in a zone that is laid out as a park, they could not have been intended merely as embankment walls. Some scholars have supposed this structure to be the huge base for a gigantic equestrian statue of either Augustus or Tiberius, raised high up on the mountain in sight of the landing at Capri's Marina; and they link this hypothesis with the still surviving legend about a statue of Tiberius on horseback; but the gossipy and scandal mongering tales about the life Tiberius was living in Capri would not have failed to mention it. It seems consequently more likely to think of a *Specularium*, of an observatory which, being in accordance with the mystical tendencies of the emperor and with the specific duties of his trusted advisor and soothsayer, the astrologer (*mathematicus*) Thrasillus, may have served as a *specula* for astronomic observations and, jointly with the " Torre del Faro ,, (see further on), as a look–out and signalling post during the critical days when the conspiracy of Seianus was discovered and repressed.

What with the thirst for bloody revenge, the terror of new plots and the presentiment of his own impending death, Tiberius during the last years of his life in Capri, was certainly a prey to his morbid mania for the astrological theories he believed in and cultivated. There is a passage in Tacitus (*Ann.*, VI, 21) which throws a particular light on the emperor's life in the most remote and precipitous places in his island and amid a flock of soothsayers. Tacitus writes that whenever Tiberius wished to consult one of his astrologers, he chose the highest part of his palace and the assistance of a freedman. " This one, a rough and powerful fellow, took the man whose soothsaying capabilities the emperor had decided to test, up inaccessible and precipitous paths (for the palace is built on rocks — *nam saxis domus imminet*),

and on their return, at the slightest suspicion of his incapacity or imposture, the soothsayer was hurled into the sea, so as to suppress the producer of a false or wrong prophecy ,,. This ghastly account becomes grotesque when Tacitus in the same chapter proceeds to tell us about Thrasillus' luck and the blind faith Tiberius had in him. " Having taken also Thrasillus, who had already made a strong impression on the emperor by announcing the throne and the future to him, to these rocks, Tiberius asked him, almost in jest, whether he was informed also about his own horoscope and whether he was aware what that year and that day were going to mean for him. Then Thrasillus, after ascertaining the position of the stars and measuring their distances (all this took place by night on an open terrace; and we imagine it to have been on the Loggia of the *specularium* or on the rocky belvedere of the emperor's dwelling quarters) fearing lest he should come to the end of other soothsayers, and not venturing to reply to the question he was to answer, shouted that a danger was threatening him, a deadly if an uncertain one. And then Tiberius embraced him, reassured him, congratulated him and restored his trust to him ,,. A childish and farcical anecdote, but one that helps us to realize at least that in Rome the natural course of the tyrant's crimes and misdeeds was well known.

There is a passage of Suetonius (*Vita Tib.*, 65) where a scene is described that could nowhere be better located than on this terrace overlooking the Capri sea. He writes about the anguished anxiety with which Tiberius, while the conspiracy of Seianus was being repressed, espied from the summit of a precipitous rock (*speculabundus ex altissima rupe*) the signals which he had ordered to be made from a distance, so as not to be forced to await the arrival of messengers and to make his decisions according to the course of events.

Store rooms and kitchens. – By going along an internal corridor and an external ramp that ascends around the western front of the Palace, one reaches the store rooms and the Kitchens (*figg. 4–5*).

The store rooms occupy the basement of the western wing which was used, as has already been mentioned, to lodge the service personnel and the retinue in its three or four storeys. There are six vaulted rooms of different heights, for they are conditioned by the gradual rise along the rocky hill; with windows of decreasing size cut into the thick and twofold lining of the wall of the façade; the lime plastering and the basins that are now seen were a later addition of the mediaeval age, when these rooms were turned into cisterns, so that nothing may be inferred as to the purpose each of the rooms fulfilled. Through one of them

FIG. 23 — VILLA JOVIS — WALLS OF THE SPECULARIUM

FIG. 24 – VILLA JOVIS – THE SECTION OF THE KITCHENS AND THE EXTERNAL RAMP ON THE WESTERN SIDE

which is provided with a door and stairs instead of a window, the outside and the kitchens were reached.

The section of the k i t c h e n s , like in all fashionable villas, formed a separate building, distinct from the rest of the dwelling. And the kitchens were installed here without overmuch troubling about the appearance of the frontage; they were rationally located in front of the dwelling quarters and the store rooms so as to form a moderately high but sufficiently roomy edifice between the external ramp and the vestibule of the palace.

The k i t c h e n (see plan) is a large rectangular room which was originally vaulted and has a very worn flooring of crushed brick. Square windows were cut in the low walls so that the slanting light should easily reach the fireplaces which were backed against all the four walls so as to form, together with the supporting pillars and the base, a continuous unit all around the room. On the north–eastern corner there is seen the base for an oven, only the bottom of the opening and plentiful coal residues on the ground remain. Since the installation is completely uniform with no distinctions whatever, it is to be believed that this kitchen was exclusively meant for the retinue personnel and that the emperor's meals were prepared in a separate kitchen.

There is a large basin in a rectangular room to the east of the large kitchen which is supplied with a water main and must have been the sink where the table ware was washed; there are also other ill–preserved rooms backing against the west side and below the level of the kitchen that, owing to the presence of the remains of a baking oven, are supposed to have been used for bread–making and baking. This part of the buildings is crossed in all directions by channels and grooves discharging refuse and dirty water into the net work of drains that extends along this side of the Palace.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

The Torre del Faro, sturdily set upon the sharp edge of the rock forming the watershed between the two slopes of the island, stands in front of, and detachel from, the body of the buildings of the Palace (*fig. 26*). It is a massive square base 12 metres each side, well preserved up to the height of the first storey, and truncated above. The ruin is now 16 metres high and in view of the lofty position on which it is built, it may be assumed that it did not, originally, rise higher than 22–24 metres. The outside part of the base is made of good brick work, but the inside is formed by a monolithic block of sound casting workmanship lavishly cemented with sandy pozzuolana lime. On the north western corner there are a pillar and the shoulder of an arch which, as well as other remains scattered on the ground, formed an easy viaduct leading to the first storey of the lighthouse; an internal stair must have existed leading from the first storey to the terrace on which smoke and light signals were lighted. While excavating on the western side of the base amid debris and rubble a vast amount of coal and ash was found, left over from the last times the lighthouse was used, as it still was during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

The principal object in bulding the lighthouse must have been its use as a signalling tower (semaphore) when the Tiberian Villa was erected: it communicated with the not distant light-house of Cape Athenaeum (Punta della Campanella), as well as with the farther away lighthouse that has been recently uncovered on the hills commanding the Misenum harbour, where the Roman fleet was stationed in readiness for the emperor's orders. Once *Villa Jovis* had become Tiberius' official and preferred residence, the existence of an efficient lighthouse and semaphore became indispensable to the functioning of the government, to quick communications with Rome and to the transmission of the emperor's orders. Owing to this the crumbling of

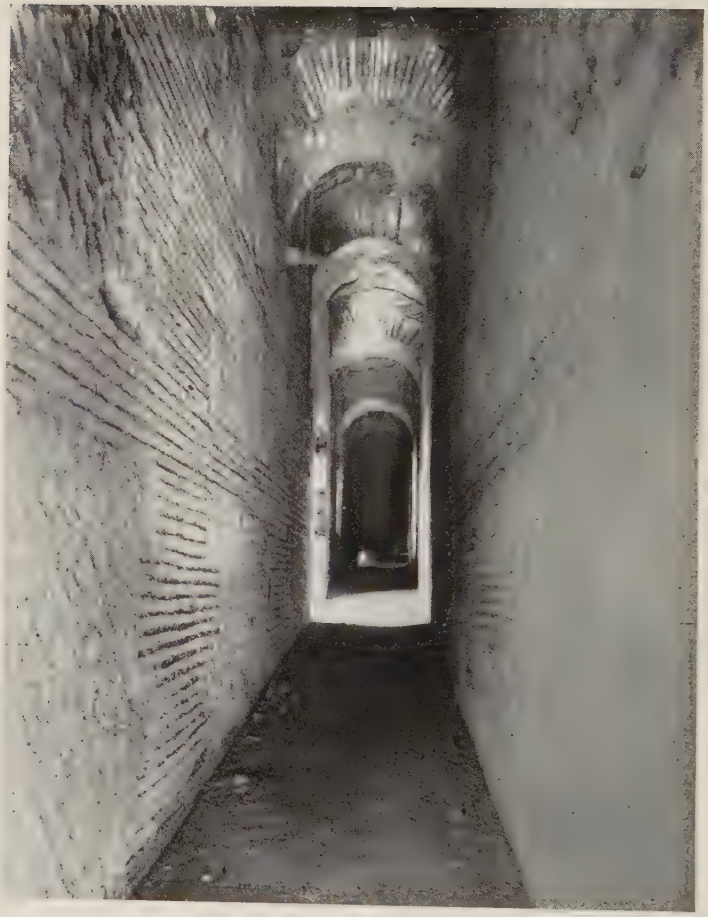

FIG. 25 — VILLA JOVIS — THE STORE-ROOMS CORRIDOR

the Torre del Faro a few days before the death of Tiberius was reckoned among the ill-omened presages of his end (SVETONIUS, *Vita Tib.*, 74): *" Et paucos antequam obiret dies, turris Phari terrae motu Capreis concidit ,,.*

FIG. 26 – VILLA JOVIS – THE LIGHTHOUSE

The lighthouse must have been restored not more than 30–40 years later and then covered with a fine brick lining, so that the poet Statius was able to mention it in one of his *Silvae* (III, 5, 100 ff.) during the reign of Domitianus in its proper function as a lighthouse guiding the sailors by shining from the high rocks on which the poet no longer set the ill famed palace of Tiberius, but the royal home of the Teleboi, the mythical inhabitants of Capri:

Teleboumque domus, trepidis ubi dulcia nautis
Lumina noctivagae tollit Pharus aemula lunae.

" ... the home of the Teleboi where the lighthouse shows to the sailors its sweet light vying with the nightly moon ,,.

The Park. – The rest of the rocky ground included between the central building of the Villa, the Loggia of the *ambulatio* and the Loggia of the *specularium,* where no structures of particular importance existed, was laid out as a park, just as the whole side of the mountain sloping down from the " Torre del Faro ,, and from Monte Lauro towards the valley between the Tuoro and the S. Michele hills formed a single vast park (*saltus*). And this part of the Villa was not merly open to the service personnel, but was also accessible to the emperor and his retinue as

may be realized from the wide and easy ramp turning along the western side of the Palace and more directly leading to the imperial quarters and to the great Loggia of the *ambulatio* and of the *triclinium*. Pines, laurels, holm oaks, the large trees that are growing here once again alongside of giant junipers, hedges of myrtle and of sweet smelling broom covering the bare rocks of the craggy Villa of Tiberius allow us — in so enchanting natural surroundings — to think more serenely of the tragic events that took place amid these walls while the full sway of a tyrant's power was bitterly exercised in a desolate solitude even more bitterly endured (see *fig. 11*).

The dramatic historical vicissitudes of *Villa Jovis* as an imperial residence ended during the second and third centuries of the empire. During the middle ages on the very top of the Palace, above the rooms where the emperor lived, there was built a chapel that was dedicated to St. Christopher and St. Leonard (now to S. Maria del Soccorso) and a hermit sought shelter amid its ruins who was enabled thanks to the gifts of the faithful and of pilgrims to keep the light burning on the Torre del Faro so that sailors could steer safely through the straits between Punta della Campanella and Monte Tiberio during stormy nights;[1] thus an inscrutable fate seems to link these ruins no less with the solitude of an emperor than with the peaceful solitude of a hermit who carried out his charitable duties by keeping alight the providential fire of the lighthouse.

DAMECUTA

The Romans were not so keen as the moderns on sea bathing, and in their view the Anacapri highland, because of its greater altitude and its more open exposure to westerly and north–westerly winds was the most suitable place for a summer resort in a sea climate and at moderate height. With the wooded side of Mount Solaro gently sloping down, with its clusters of oak trees, junipers, myrtles and broom, and its scattered little houses, Anacapri seemed to them like a little Arcadia cut off from the rest of the island by a rocky pass. An aerial solitude whose secret and delicate fascination must have appealed to Tiberius rather than to Augustus. Possibly Augustus may have walked up from his sea side Villa of " Palazzo a Mare ,, to the belvedere of the Villa di Capodimonte, where both the

1) It has been suggested by other scholars that the original chapel of St. Christopher and St. Leonard stood in the buildings of the entrance of the Villa and thus more immediately close to the Lighthouse.

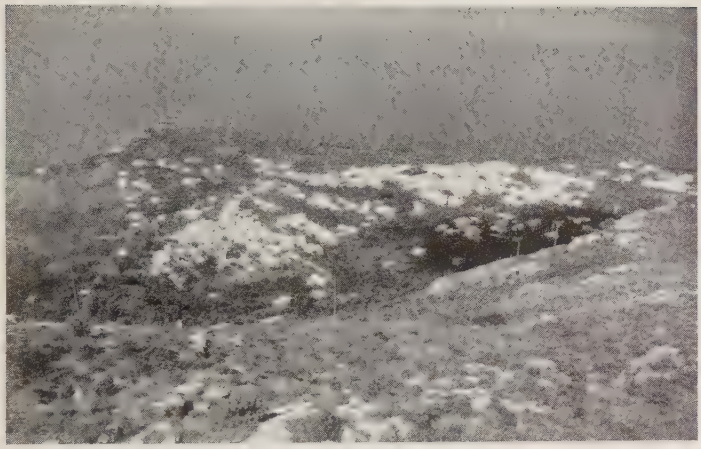

FIG. 27 – ANACAPRI, CAPRILE, AND THE DAMECUTA HEADLAND FROM MOUNT SOLARO

FIG. 28 – THE WESTERN SLOPE OF ANACAPRI FROM DAMECUTA

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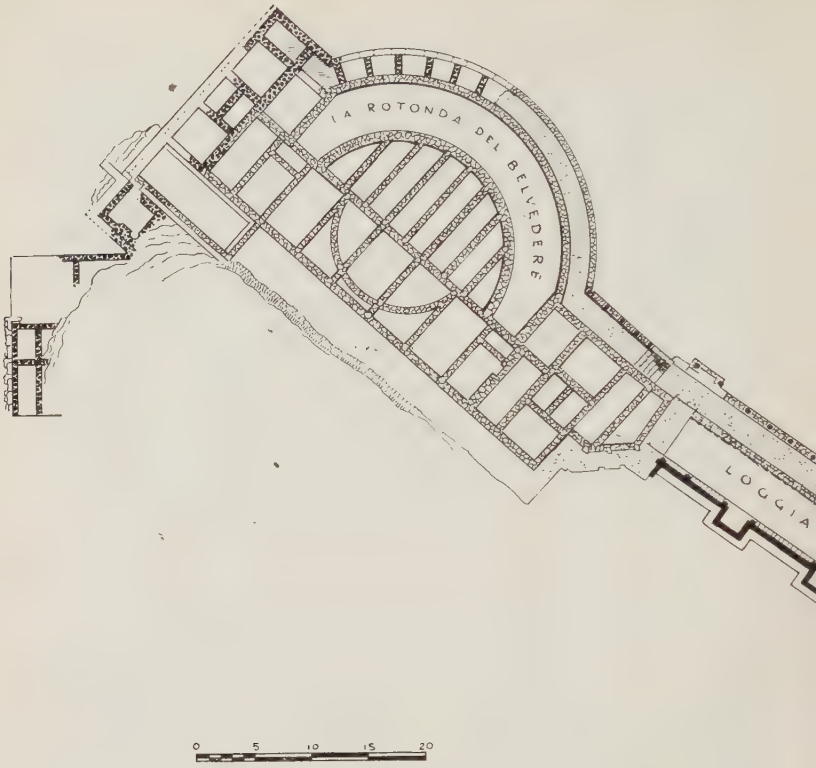
LA ROTONDA DEL BELVEDERE
LOGGIA
0
5
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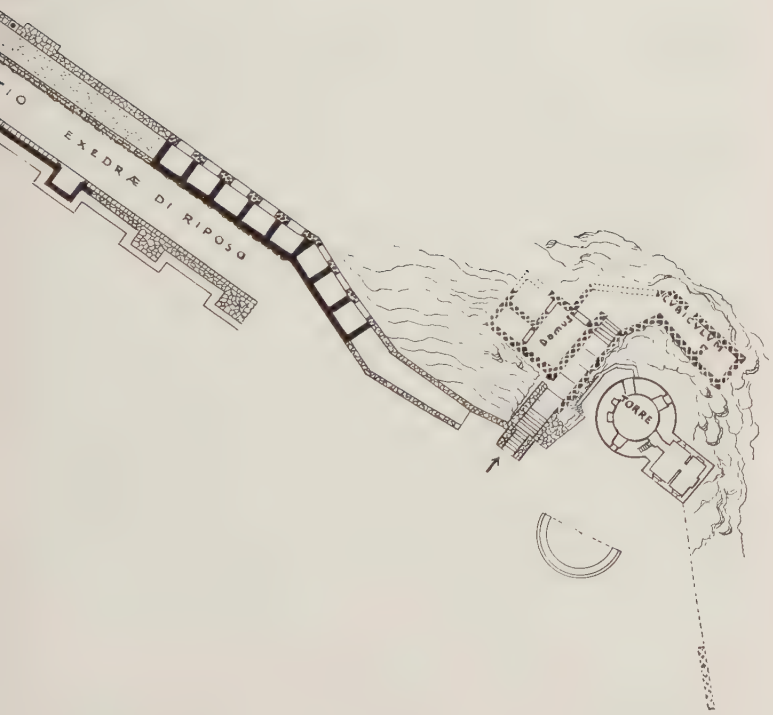
PIANTA
DELLA VILLA ROMANA
DI DAMECUTA



pass and the boundary were between two different worlds, that of Capri and that of Anacapri; but it was Tiberius who searched for further shelters within that unknown Arcadia. Discarding the centre of the ancient dwellings of Anacapri, as too closely clinging to the mountain side and too far from the sight of the sea, he chose the small plateaus and the terraces along the edge of the highland where the villas and the farmhouses of *Tiberino, Vitareto, Aiano* and *Monticello* were built, but his own imperial residence was to rise in a place that offered a wider panorama and was less laboriously reached from the sea, namely in the Villa di Damecuta.

It stands on a headland jutting out like a break-water from the bulk of Mount Solaro (*fig. 27*), with a straight sharp outline as if to cut into the sea and a vast level ground preceding it as if laid out on purpose as a site for a villa from which to enjoy one of the finest views in the whole island. Straight ahead of the bow are seen Procida and Ischia against the horizon, joined and melting together beneath the summit of Mount Epoméo; towards the south the mountain flows down amid a forest of oaks, carobs and olive trees and the coastline is frayed by the coves (Cala) del *Lupinaro*, del *Rio*, del *Tombosiello* and del *Limbo*, by splits and fissures that seem to have been created with the purpose to make the water more precious by its green and bluish opalence (*fig. 28*); to the north the black rock drops down sheer into a darker sea having the secret charm of the Blue Grotto. In this magical dreamland of rocks and sea rose the Villa di Damecuta, and its name is not to be traced back as a mistaken etymology suggested, to *Domus Augusti*, but, for its composite form and in its sound, to one of the evidently Greek place names Capri has retained.

Excavations were begun at Damecuta in 1937, when the Villa Jovis works of uncovering and repair were completed. They were interrupted and several times resumed up to 1948. To Dr. Axel Munthe much praise is due, for, by donating to the Italian Government the Tower and the land next to it which he owned, he rendered possible the esploration and settlement of the most important section of the villa. Unfortunately the condition of the remains shows that the villa was subjected to a deliberate work of destruction, which was carried out here as well as at " Palazzo a Mare „ in order to build fortifications and barracks on the flatland commanding the channel between Capri and Procida during the Bourbon restoration and the re-occupation of the island by the English. There are few and meagre accounts about such discoveries as were made during the military occupation and, later, by local farmers and excavators; but from the remains which were uncovered during more recent

FIG. 30 — DAMECUTA — THE LOGGIA AND THE QUARTERS BELOW THE TOWER

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FIG. 31 – DAMECUTA – THE LOGGIA OF THE ROMAN VILLA

excavations, and from the existence of columns of the finest Greek marbles it may be inferred that the Villa di Damecuta was as richly adorned with marble floors, stuccoes, decorative paintings and fine works of art, as the largest among the imperial villas on the island.

Anyone reaching the level ground and the Torre di Damecuta by the uncomfortable if picturesque mule paths of Anacapri, and even by the short foot-path leading from the new carriage road to the ruins, cannot but wonder about the ancient way of approach to the Villa. Doubtlessly as long as Anacapri was connected with the principal centre merely through a mountain pass and with the harbour only by the so-called " Scala fenicia ,,, the easiest and quickest approach was from the sea: when the sea was calm a landing was possible at the *Punta di Gràdola* or *delle Gradelle* where various cleavages in the rock attest the existtence of some mooring and landing arrangements; [1] the first

1) The name is derived from *gradus–gradula*, landing–small landing; not as is wrongly believed, from *gruptula* (*crypta*) thus mistakenly hoping to recognize an early mention of the Blue Grotto near by, thanks to a false etymology.

FIG. 32 — DAMECUTA — THE MEDIAEVAL TOWER AND THE QUARTERS OF THE ROMAN VILLA

resting place was by the small Roman Villa standing above the rocky vault of the Blue Grotto, whence the emperor could be carried by litter up to the height of the promontory and the Villa dei Damecuta. This was the way that was also used to carry up the materials during the building. The Villa standing on an unsheltered piece of level land, was exposed to the cool westerly winds, and was inhabited mainly during the summer months, for all kinds of official residence must have ceased at the first announcement of the autumn equinoxial storms.

Notwithstanding the destructions, the most significant parts of the Villa were found to be still well preserved during the excavations (see the plan *fig. 29*), and namely the building of the Belvedere that stretched along the edge of the level ground from one end to the other of the promontory on a plan that faithfully reproduced that of the imperial Loggia of *Villa Jovis* (*fig. 30*). There was here also a long loggia for sightseeing and for *ambulatio* supported by arches and pillars running east to west along the edge of the whole length of the esplanade; its first stretch straight, its second ascending and rounded; if it was less grand

than that of *Villa Jovis*, it had the advantage over it of a finer and more extended panorama on more varied views (*fig. 31*). The external lobby on the first stretch was originally roofed by a small portico supported by columns, which was flanked on the inside by a second *ambulatio* provided with resting seats. And at the western end of the Loggia luxurious residential apartments with a *triclinium* hall allowed, at Damecuta as well as at *Villa Jovis*, the means for a more restful enjoyment of the view on the coast and the sea and of the cool air during summer nights.

The most peculiar apartment of the Villa, however, was uncovered under the mediaeval Tower, almost gripped to the precipitous slope of the headland (*fig. 32*). There is an alcove (*cubiculum*) under the Tower which is preceded by a vestibule (*procoeton*) and by a belvedere balcony hanging above the abyss; further to the west, under the loggia, there are two large dwelling rooms. Bearing in mind the way in which Tiberius managed to confine himself in his private quarters apart from the rest of the Villa, one recognizes in this tiny apartment, the secret refuge Tiberius himself preferred while residing at Damecuta, suited to a dreamer of a romantic age rather than to an emperor. An unforeseen discovery makes a certainty of this possibility. In the vestibule of the cubicle a fine torso of an ephebic nude has been discovered during recent excavations, representing a Narcissus or a Yakinthos. And as both Pliny (*N. H.*, XXXV, 6 and XXXV, 36) and Suetonius (*Vita Tib.*) attest the liking Tiberius had for art and to his habit of adorning his cubicle with pictorial and sculptorial masterpieces, the discovery of the torso of a youth, excellently executed, in the cubicle of the imperial villa of Damecuta cannot be ascribed to chance (*fig. 33*). [1]

1) For Pliny (N. H., XXXV, 36 [70]) it was simply a liking for art: *Pinxit et Archigallum* (*Parrhasius*): *quam picturam amavit Tiberius princeps: atque, ut auctor est Decius Euclio, LX sextertiis aestimatum, cubiculo suo inclusit.* And by a more noise-provoking deed, he ordered the Apokiomenos statue of Lysippus to be removed from Agrippa's *Thermae* in order to place it in his cubicle and replace it by another sculpture, and he only returned it because of noisy popular protests in the theatre. Pliny (*N. H.*, XXIV, 62: "*... distringentem se, quem Marcus Agrippa ante Thermas suas dicavit mire gratum Tiberio principi: quo non quivit temperare ubi in eo, quamquam imperiosius sui inter initia principatus, transtulitque in cubiculo, alio ibi signo substituto; cum quidem tanta populi Romani contumacia fuit, ut magnis theatri clamoribus reponi Apoxyomenon flagitaverit, princepsque, quamquam adamatum, reposuerit* „.

For Suetonius it was a perverse passion (*Vita Tib.*, 43): "*Cubicula plurifariam disposita tabellis ac sigillis lascivissimarum picturarum et figurarum adornavit librisque Elephantidis instruxit, ne cui in opera edenda exemplar imperatae schemae deesset* „.

The Villa di Damecuta was abandoned before the other villas in Capri. The Vesuvian cinder drift that was banked up against the walls of the Loggia shows that the Villa must have been hit and damaged by the cinders during the eruption of 79 a. D. and abandoned then so as to become slowly a heap of ruins. Above the imperial cubicle a paunchy and stumpy look-out tower was raised and it was hit by the artillery missiles fired by the fleet of Joachim Murat against the barracks of the English troops when Capri was taken in 1808.

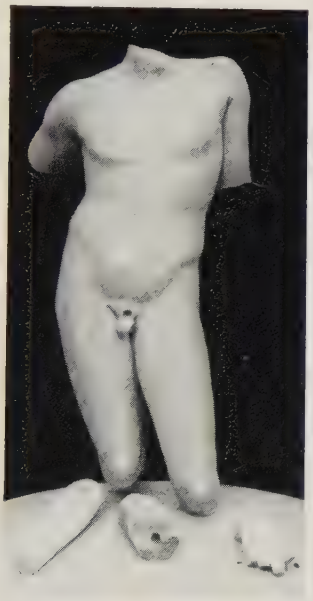

FIG. 33 — DAMECUTA
THE MUTILATED NARCYSSUS TORSO

PALAZZO A MARE

Apart from *Villa Jovis* and *Damecuta* which, owing to their remote and inaccessible locations, seem to respond perfectly to the romantic and misanthropic nature of Tiberius, the one which among all the other villas in Capri appears particularly to be suited to the character, the disposition and the brief periodical summer visits of Augustus, is the Villa that retains the classicaliy imperial name of *Palatium* in its modern denomination of " Palazzo a Mare „.

Situated as it was quite close to the shore along the low lying headland which rises by degrees from the ancient " Roman harbour „ to the vast esplanade of the present *Campo sportivo*, whence it slopes towards the small shore of the " Baths of Tiberius „, it shows in its location and planning the typical characteristics that the Romans preferred their villas to possess during the earliest imperial age, with few buildings and much space devoted to gardens and parks. Its nearness to the sea and the presence of a tiny landing harbour make it, moreover, the only sea side villa in Capri as compared with the other ones which stand at a lower or higher altitude on hills or mountains (see the plan *fig. 34*).

There are several reasons suggesting that the Villa of " Palazzo a Mare „ was the residence Augustus preferred. Its situation was particularly suited to the physical constitution of Augustus who disliked excessive heat and was forced to adopt a sternly vegetarian diet during his later years (*fig. 36*). [1]

Its exposure to the north–western wind and to the sea breeze, the vast shade cast by the high Mount Solaro that hastened the coolness of the hours of twilight and of the night; the oak forest which decked and still decks the lower slopes of the mountain with low brushwood and frames the edge of the crumbling rocks towards the sea; the possibility of reaching the few natural sources springing from the base of Mount Solaro before they disappear through the fissures of the limestone, are all circumstances that the men entrusted with the building and fitting of the imperial *domus* must have carefully considered and scrutinized while selecting the sight for the first residence Augustus had in Capri.

1) The clinical chart of Augustus' constitution and his strict dieting may be learned from SUETONIUS, *Vita Aug.*, 80–82 and likewise his dislike for the heat of the sun: ch. 82 " Solis vero ne hiberni quidem patiens, domi quoque non nisi petasatus sub divo spatiabatur... „ " He could not endure the sun even in winter and also at home never walked about without a hat „.

FIG. 35 — A LATTICED PATH CLOSE TO PALAZZO A MARE

And other no less important circumstances added themselves to those concerned with the climate. To begin with the proximity of the harbour which was no doubt built during the first years of the imperial administration of the island, for the Roman harbour being built to the west of the present one was immediately connected with the villa in which Augustus habitually resided in Capri. And there were other serious reasons for this choice such as the desire Augustus felt to get close to the local population that still retained its Greek language, manners and institutions, so as to carry out in that tiny part of the empire, particularly cherished by him because it belonged to his house, to his family and to his patrimony — his wise policy aiming at the fusion of the Greek with the Roman element, that was the essential pivot of his policy as founder of the empire. And, according to Suetonius his last visit to Capri was cheered by the satisfaction of watching the success of his endeavours (see p. 22). On the contrary Tiberius differed profoundly from Augustus also in the choice of his residence, for, though he did not completely abandon the Augustan villa of " Palazzo a Mare ,, , he selected his favourite homes in the most remote parts of the island, far away from the port and the people dwelling by it, like so many hermitages for solitude and protection.

" Palazzo a Mare ,, had perhaps the worst luck of all the villas in Capri. It was first despoiled and looted of its marble floors, its columns and works of art during the ill–omened excavations Hadrawa made in 1790–91; and it suffered more and worse damages because of the fortification works the French and the English made between 1806 and 1815, when the central area of the Villa was levelled and turned into a military parade ground (*Campo di Marte*), and the principal body of the buildings on the eastern side (that must have been the actual living quarter of the emperor) was transformed into a little fort (*Fortino*) with casemates and gun emplacements. Later still during the nineteenth century and even nowadays villas, hotels and farm houses were erected within the area of the old *Palatium* taking advantage of the solid embankment works the Romans had made, and of the several capacious cisterns that are still found scattered about on all sides. The group of buildings that has been spared military or civilian inroads is the still imposing one on the extreme north western wing, which is known as " Bagni di Tiberio ,,.

But these " Baths of Tiberius ,, are no more than the sea side section of a large villa, that in order to provide the actual facilities of a summer resort, was laid out as a vast park with large gardens, shady groves, walking avenues and belvedere terraces

for over 800 metres in length and 200 metres in width between the Roman port and the little harbour of the " Baths of Tiberius ,,. It was in fact in accordance with the type of an " open ,, Villa, with small buildings scattered here and there, ample wooded and shady sections, with a nobly dignified *domus* in the healthiest place whence the finest panorama could be enjoyed, a type that was derived from the most ancient *villa* such as is described in Cato's and Varro's works, a farming–villa with a *fundus* attached. And it is no wonder that Augustus adopted this plan for his Capri villa, for we know that he did not care for grandiose residences, so much so that he ordered his niece Julia's villa to be demolished, because it ran counter to those rules of sobriety that he practised himself and wished his family to follow. 1)

Despite the almost total destruction of the old buildings, the general plan of the villa is not difficult to make out from the massive supporting walls that follow all along the several parts of it which were reserved as dwellings or gardens (*fig. 36*).

The centre of this vast unit was the large and fine esplanade of the " Campo sportivo ,, formerly " Campus Martis ,, which was raised on massive walls with arches and pillars well above all the surrounding ground. The suggestion that was made that this area formed a public *Palaestra* is to be discarded; it is more likely that this was the large *xystus*– garden of the imperial villa, and namely that section, crossed by paths, some sunny and some shady, which formed the *ambulatio* of every rich Roman villa. And we are assured by his ancient biographer that Augustus liked to have simple and ample garden terraces and shady paths with the added coolness of neighbouring woods in the villas in which he sought his summer rest, for Suetonius writes (*Vita Aug.*, 72) that the emperor took greater pleasure in sunny gardens and in woods than in statues and paintings. 2)

As there is no grand central building in " Palazzo a Mare ,, such as that at *Villa Jovis*, after so great a destruction and so many transformations, it is more difficult to find out which was actually the imperial dwelling place. It is probably to be traced in the rests of buildings that were immediately connected with

1) Suetonius, *Vita Aug.*, 72: " Ampla et operosa praetoria gravabatur. Et neptis quidem suae Iuliae, profuse ab ea extructa, etiam diruit ad solum... ,, – " He did not take kindly to residences that were too large and luxurious, so much so that he razed to the ground the villa his niece Julia had at great cost built for herself ,,.

2) Suetonius, *Vita Aug.*, 72: " Sua vero (praetoria) quamvis modica non tam statuarum tabularumque pictarum ornatu, quam xystis et nemoribus excoluit... ,, – " On the contrary his (residences), though modest, were embellished by him with paths and groves rather than with statues and pictures ,,.

FIG. 36 – PALAZZO A MARE – SUPPORTING ARCHES

the large esplanade of the *xystus,* and namely in the ancient buildings of sound reticulated masonry that were embodied in the old *Fortino* and have been transformed into a private villa (Villa Dubuf now Williams) which is still surrounded by a crown of old holm oaks, the trees that became sacred because of the prodigy which took place when Augustus first landed on the island.

FIG. 37 – BATHS OF TIBERIUS – THE "NYMPHAEUM EXEDRA,,

FIG. 38 – BATHS OF TIBERIUS – THE BASIN OF THE PISCINA

Bagni di Tiberio. – Grand and massive are, instead, the edifices of the " Baths of Tiberius ,, that are dear to every admirer of Capri because of the suggestive beauty of those ruins and the crystal clearness of the sea glimmering between ruins and boulders (see plan *fig. 34*). The ensemble of the remains is formed by a gigantic embankment wall, almost a bastion raised to support and to contain the sliding clayish earth above it; a large dwelling which backs against it; a *nymphaeum exedra* with sweet and sea water fish-ponds (*fig. 37*); a tiny harbour with quay and break water walls against the rushing waves beating against the shore during the north western storms (*fig. 38*); and although some of the buildings, like the *nymphaeum exedra* must be ascribed to Tiberius, the whole body of the " Villa of Palazzo a Mare ,, retains its clear Augustan features.

THE GROTTOES

Because of the nature of its limestone soil and of the geological vicissitudes of its slow emergence the island of Capri abounds in natural grottoes. Most of them are on sea level, but not a few are found at a more or less considerable altitude above the sea. Besides the celebrated " Grotta Azzurra ,, whose

narrow breach of access opens at sea level on the northern coast anyone rowing along the broken southern coast may see a whole series of more or less accessible sea-grottoes all designed by names that either savour of fishermen's slang or have been suggested by the genteel taste of romantic literature and tourist guidebooks: thus " Grotta Gràdola „ was turned into " Grotta Azzurra „; " Grotta Ruòfolo „ into " Grotta Rossa „; " Grotta dell'Orefice „ into " Grotta Verde „; and further " Grotta dell'Arsenale „; " Grotta del Monacone „ and " Grotta Bianca „.

Still on the southern side, but high up along the rocky wall, there are: the " Grotta delle felci „ (of the ferns) which was inhabited by pre-historic men and opens into the wall of Mount Solaro; the " Grotta del Castiglione „ a vast ear-shaped cave cutting deep into the wall of the rock; the " Grotta di Matromania „ hidden away in the most wooded and rocky recess of the island between the " Arco Naturale „ and " Punta Massullo „.

Just as the Romans inherited from the Greek and the Anatolian worlds their worship for natural caves sacred to the Water Nymphs and to the secret rites of the Orgic deities, they also drew from them their taste for natural and artificial *nymphaea* as adornments of villas and palaces. And Capri, with its wealth of caves and ponds full of the mysteriously romantic charm of rocks and sea, offered to the architect of the imperial villas and to the morbidly romantic taste of Tiberius yet another element to add to the villas so as to provide sites for excursions and pastimes to the emperor and his retinue. It is true enough that even this innocent taste for grottoes of the old emperor, who cherished the remote shade of the rocks and the caves, became in the malignant pages of his ancient biographer a further ground for charging him with secret and unwholesome licenciousness, [1] but we need not be led astray by the mischievous gossip about the secret life of Tiberius in Capri which was all over Rome; and we had better attempt to realize that which was one of the essential attractions of the Capri landscape for the taste of the Romans: the nymphaeum-grotto; we see it in two sea grottoes (" Grotta Azzurra „ and " Grotta dell'Arsenale „; and in two land-grottoes (" Grotta del Castiglione „ and " Grotta di Matromania „).

1) Suetonius, *Vita Tib.*, 43: " In silvis quoque ac nemoribus passim venerios locos commentus est, prostantisque per antra et cavas rupes ex utriusque sexus pube Paniscorum et Nympharum habitu, palamque jam et vulgo, nomine insulae abutentes, Caprineum dictitabant... „. – " And also amid woods and groves he deviced aphrodisiac places where in caves and ponds adolescents of both sexes lay about in the garb of Satyrs and Nymphs; so that everyone openly called him ' Caprineum ' (Goaty) from the name of the island „.

FIG. 39 – BOATS WAITING BY THE ENTRANCE OF THE BLUE GROTTO

The GROTTA AZZURRA. – Not the discovery, but the revelation of the " Blue Grotto „ is to be credited to the romantic disposition of two German tourists who visited Capri in 1826: Augustus Kopisch, a writer, and Ernst Fries, a painter. The Grotta was, however, already known locally as " Grotta Gràdola „ , the name being taken from the neighbouring ancient landing place of *Gràdola* and *Gradelle*, even though it was avoided as a weird and bewitched place not so much because of its narrow access, as because of the legends about monsters and witches that dwelt in it. At all events, paying their due to the daring of the two German travellers, to their guide, a fisherman Angelo Ferraro nicknamed " Riccio „ , to Giuseppe Pagano, a notary who provided them with Latin inscriptions and good wine, to the donkey-man who strapped on the tubs, the Greek fire and all that was required for the exploration, their chief merit was that of bestowing a new name: Grotta Azzurra that was bound to translate itself, as it actually did, into a countless series of enthusiastic descriptions more or less rhapsodical, of coloured lithographs, of water colours, oil paintings and earthenware and more simply of postcards which have ended by tinting with azure every show or exhibition concerned with Capri (*fig. 39–40*).

FIG. 40 — THE GROTTA AZZURRA — A NINETEENTH CENTURY NEAPOLITAN GOUACHE

The lucky concurrence of geological and spelaeological conditions have endowed the grotto with a twofold enchantment. The cave sank during a geological age 15–20 metres below the present sea level and thus blocked every opening through which light might enter directly, except the narrow breach of access with the result that both the cavity of the grotto and the sea basin that is enclosed in it acquired two different and magical colours, for, on one side the sunlight penetrating from below through a veil of sea water springs out and is reflected onto the sides and the vault of the grotto coloured with azure; and on the other side, this light being reflected by the white sandy bottom of the grotto renders the water strangely opalescent so that any object that is bathed in it drips and vibrates with a silvery light.

Already the first explorers clearly realized that the Romans not only knew the Blue Grotto, but had made it the object of particular investigations, though the type of their researches was obscure. It is necessary to add, that since the hypothesis according to which the cave has sunk 6 or 7 metres deeper since the Roman age is untenable, the conditions of the grotto were the same as they are to–day in the days of Augustus and Tiberius. And a careful study of the remains of Roman works inside the grotto and of the ancient structures on the outside, may assist us to understand what the " Blue Grotto „ meant to the Romans.

Owing to the fascination of the coloured lights and the shortness of the time due to the throng of tourists, few visitors notice that along the end wall facing the breach of access the Grotta lengthens out into a rocky cavity about a metre above water level, and that this cavity is accessible by a small landing step covered by Roman concrete work; while a square opening in the shape of a window which is accessible from a step evidently cut by human hands is opened in the wall of the rock just opposite the entrance. The rocky landing step and the square opening seem to be made on purpose to permit people to land and to enjoy comfortably from the land the fascinatingly clear basin of azure. But this square hollow reaches deeper into the roots of the mountain becoming an increasingly winding and narrow cuniculus; and the slabs of rock heaped at its sides suggest that the Romans opened this tunnel searching for spring water and abandoned it after a toilsome and fruitless exploration.

Above and about the outside of the Grotta, on the lowest reach of the mountain are to be seen the remains of a small Roman villa (*Villa di Gràdola* or *Gradelle*) having several rooms and a few cisterns, that in its plan and in its structure is similar to the other villas of the Augustan–Tiberian period.

Therefore the Romans not only knew the " Blue Grotto „ and probably cut the narrow gap through which it is possible

FIG. 41 — THE GROTTA DELL'ARSENALE — THE ENTRANCE

nowadays to enter it, but meant to render a visit to it easier and more restful by building a villa above it in a place that still looks wild and inaccessible and that offers no shelter even for small boats. They also tried unsuccessfully to catch a vein of spring water to be used perhaps in one of those fish ponds into which both fresh and sea water flowed.

But since the " Blue Grotto ,, and the small Villa *Gràdola* are below the imposing " Villa di Damecuta ,, that is raised above on the *Arcèra* headland, it is obvious to suppose that the Grotta with its *Gràdola* landing place and the Villa di Damecuta above, formed a single unit in which the " Blue Grotto ,, merely represented the natural sea side *nymphaeum* of the large Villa above,

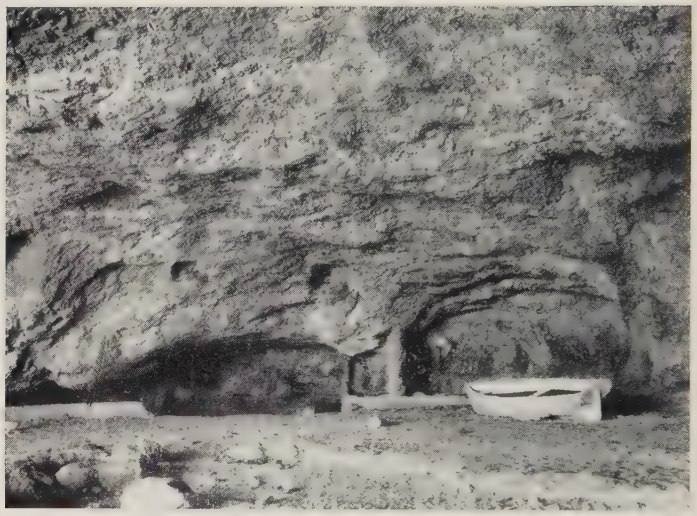

FIG. 42 — THE GROTTA DELL'ARSENALE — THE INTERIOR

a *nymphaeum* that was accessible from the sea, and perhaps also from the land by a more secret road that has now crumbled. Thus the "Blue Grotto„ was the model which inspired the plan and the decoration of all the other rocky *nymphaea* in the island to the Romans, who by covering the walls and the vaults with mosaics, endeavoured to reproduce the inimitable colour of that pond that was the natural home of Glaucus and of his blue-haired retinue of Nereids.

The GROTTA DELL'ARSENALE between the "Piccola Marina„ and the "Punta di Tragàra„ has been wrongly taken by many for a shipyard and as wrongly for a temple and a bathing hall. It is on the contrary a grandiose sea-side *nymphaeum*. It stands four metres above sea level and has a vast opening towards the south-west (*fig. 41*) it opens out on the inside into an almost circular cavity with a maximum diametre of 37 metres, and a vault whose height notably decreases from the edge of the entrance towards the end. A low wall running as a base all along its rocky sides and the large niches cut in the end of the grotto (*fig. 42*) prove that it actually was a *nymphaeum*, and even better evidence of this was provided by

FIG. 43 — THE GROTTA DEL CASTIGLIONE SEEN FROM THE SEA

the plentiful polychrome marbles that were found here and belonged to the floor and by the many mosaic *tesserae* which coated the ceiling of the vault. Now the vault is completely bare, but six panel boxes having traces of plastering that are seen on the western section show that the ceiling of the Grotto was coated like the ceiling of a large hall by *lacunaria* of stuccoes and mosaics. During the haphazard excavations that were made inside this grotto in 1879, besides the remains of the rich floor of inlaid polychrome marbles that must have covered the whole surface of the cave, there was found a large fragment of a blue

glass dish adorned with white enamelled fishes in relief which became unfortunately lost along the untraceable routes of the antiquarian trade.

This grotto–*nymphaeum* in Capri strikingly resembles in location, plan and decoration, the grotto–*nymphaeum* of Sperlonga along the coast between Terracina and Gaeta, which is mainly known because of a dangerous episode in the life of Tiberius told by Tacitus (*Ann.*, IV, 59) and by Suetonius (*Vita Tiberi*, 39); and namely the crumbling of the entrance to a cave (*spelunca*) by which Tiberius might have been hit, had not Seianus ensured a way for the emperor's safety, by arching his own powerful shoulders as a prop.[1] One might almost suppose that the " Grotta dell'Arsenale „ reminded Tiberius of this dramatic incident, and of the still unsuspected loyalty of his powerful minister.

The GROTTA DEL CASTIGLIONE had possibly the largest share in the millennial vicissitudes of Capri. Its opening is a huge gash along the southern side of the rocky Castiglione hill (*fig. 43*) which is crowned on top by a mediaeval castle. With its back against the opposite side of the hill there rose one of the finest among the Capri imperial villas, rich in marble and mosaic floors and adorned with stuccoes and works of art. It was stripped and despoiled during the excavations made by the Austrian Hadrawa in the last years of the eighteenth century, so that now, the ground having been filled in and turned into cultivated fields, it is only just possible to trace some stretches of reticulated masonry (see p. 32). The grotto was inhabited by neolithic peoples who found excellent shelter in it and a fine look–out post, and also sated their thirst with the water slowly dripping from the vault. The Romans turned it into a superb *nynphaeum* for the Villa built on the opposite side of the hill. Later it formed part of the defensive works and of the shelters of the mediaeval castle, so much so as to be used as a secret abode of the people during piratical inroads. These successive transformations and uses have finally separated the " Grotta del Castiglione „ from the Villa to which it clearly belonged and rendered its access almost impossible from the north; but the remains of structural works that are still visible inside and the

1) TACITUS, *Ann.*, IV, 59: " Vescebatur in villa, cui vocabulum Speluncae, mare Amunclanum inter et Fundanos montes, nativo in specu. Eius os lapsis repente saxis, obruit quosdam ministros. Hinc metus in omnes et fuga eorum, qui convivium celebrabant: Seianus genu vultuque et manibus super Caesarem suspensus opposuit sese incidentibus, atque habitu tali repertus est a militibus, qui subsidio venerant „.

SUETONIUS, *Vita Tib.*, 39: " (Tiberius) juxta Terracinam in praetorio, cui Speluncae nomen est, incoenante eo complura et ingentia saxa fortuito superne delapsa sunt, multisque convivarum et ministrorum elisis, praeter spem evasit „.

FIG. 44 – ALONG THE DESCENT TO THE ARCO NATURALE AND TO THE GROTTA DI MATROMANIA

FIG. 45 – THE GROTTA DI MATROMANIA – INTERIOR

earthenware that was gathered there (some *amphorae* and the characteristic Roman flower pots) obviously show that it was a hill–side *nymphaeum*. Thus the Villa had its panorama terrace where now the mediaeval castle stands, and a large *exedra* for rest and the enjoyment of the view in the " Grotta del Castiglione „ whence the striking panorama of the " Piccola Marina „ and the Faraglioni could be embraced.

The GROTTA DI MATROMANIA, which is half hidden amid the grand scenery of the rocks dropping sheer down the extreme south–eastern side of the island, doubtlessly retains the memory of the deity to which it was dedicated in its name (*fig. 44*). But the cult of Mitra was certainly brought to Capri later than the Julian–Claudian age; and it is thus obvious to think, rather than of Mitra, of the *Magna Mater* whose Corybantic cult is attested in the Sorrento peninsula during the reign of Domitianus by the poet Statius. The savage beauty of the site among woods and rocks should have rendered it particularly suited to the Orgiastic rites of the goddess Cybele.

Whether this place was dedicated to the *Magna Mater* or not, the Grotto has the appearance of an imposing natural cave transformed into a luxurious *nymphaeum* in which was collected the dripping water which filtered through the rocks above,

formerly more abundantly than now, into a small cave at the bottom of the grotto.

The irregularly shaped Grotto (*fig. 45*) was consolidated and rendered more regular with massive masonry structures by the Romans, so as to assume the shape of a rectangular apsed hall; the walls at the two sides originally supported the vaulted ceiling of the Grotto; the end being formed by two high semi-circular plinths and by the natural rock wall, out of which flowed a spring of fresh water that was collected in a small hollow; this precious clear water could be reached by a row of steps. These structures and arrangements clearly point out the character of this mysterious grotto; it was not a sanctuary, but an arrangement whereby the hidden water springs of a natural cave were adapted to the more noble and luxurious function of a *nymphaeum*.

Its decoration cannot have been less refined than the one we have recognized in another *nymphaeum*, that of " Grotta dell'Arsenale ,,: the evidence of mosaic *tesserae* of glass paste, incrustations imitating stalactites and mother of pearl, molluscan shells and pods which were collected in large amounts during the haphazard explorations of antiquarians and so-called archaeologists, proves that the semi-circular plinths, the walls and the vault were covered here too with a flashy polychrome decoration of stuccoes and mosaics, according to the taste and the fashion of the Hellenistic *nymphaea* which were adopted by the Romans in their finer town houses and in their most sumptuous villas.

THE WORKS OF ART

During the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries all the principal Roman monuments in the island were excavated rather for the sake of profit than for that of knowledge; consequently the things found were scattered about more often in private than in public collections, thus rendering difficult a general conspectus of such objects as have so far been taken from the ground that possess some artistic value. Also the accounts of local writers, and the information that may be gathered from documents and from men such as Hadrawa who preferred to describe himself what he discovered, all mention only fine floors of polychrome inlaid marble which were removed and more or less arbitrarily repaired placing them in churches and palaces of Capri and Naples, but no statues and reliefs. Only exceptionally marble and glass jars, jewels and cameos of some merit are recorded. And this irreparable dispersal is scarcely remedied by the private

FIG. 46 – "LA CAVALCATA,, – LANDSCAPE RELIEF FROM VILLA JOVIS

collections which, according to nineteenth century usage, contain exhibits of different provenance, few of which may safely be traced to discoveries and excavations made in the island: such are the Williams collection at Palazzo a Mare, the MacKowen collection at Anacapri mostly formed with finds at Damecuta, the Cerio collection of a more restricted Capri interest and containing valuable prehistoric material excavated during the building of the Quisisana hotel and found in the Grotta delle Felci, and the richer but more heterogeneous Axel Munthe collection at St. Michele. But it may be inferred that the imperial villas and the public edifices in Capri must have possessed valuable statues, from the passion Tiberius felt for works of art, a passion that had once induced him to challenge the people's discontent by removing a statue by Lysippus from the public for a time; while such an inference is further justified by the discoveries at Capri; of the base of a statue with the signature of A g a t h o n o d o r o s of Rhodes one of the best sculptors of the later Hellenistic period; of a fine ephebic torso in the imperial cubicle of Damecuta Villa, and finally of a relief and two well heads at *Villa Jovis* (they were found during the 1826 excavations and are now in the Naples Museum).

a *b*

FIG. 47 [illegible]

The relief (*fig. 46*) which is usually known by the name of *La Cavalcata* (the Ride) presents the scene of a country idyll. A man and a young woman riding on a horse led by a stable hand are approaching a tree laden with apples; the woman looking upwards is picking or beating down with a sort of club some of the apples. Under the tree a little statue of a hero or a deity, perhaps either Hercules or Sylvanus stands on a column crowned with leaves and fruits.

The well heads (*fig. 47*) very similar in size and type and both showing a decoration of vegetal inspiration, but different in style and execution, deserve to be considered among the best examples of the decorative art of the empire.

On the first one (*fig. 47-a*) two strong branches of a vine, loaded with bunches of grapes, with big scattered berries, rise up from a cluster of acanthus and wind round the surface of the well head. The relief is fleshy, thick and strongly marked; the vine leaves are arranged in a uniform pattern and the grapes bunched like nuts, the whole revealing a rather pretentious and studied care for ornamental composition. Far more delicate was the hand of the artist who worked the second well head at a very slight relief, and with so elegant a sharpness in arranging the branches and the vine leaves as to suggest the art of an engraver of precious metal vases and jewels, than of a sculptor (*fig. 47-b*). The pattern shows two acanthus branches, cut and tied at the bottom to a bow and to a quiver; but here the leaves open, stretch out

FIG. 48 – A MITRA RELIEF

and fold so that they appear to be shivering as though they were still full of sap.

The Mitra relief (*fig. 48*) now in the Naples Museum and reputed to come from Capri has, on the contrary, more historical and religious than artistic significance. The goddess is as usually presented in her ritual Phrygian attire sacrificing a bull (*taurobolion*) between the figurations above of the *Sun* and the *Moon*, and of the Mitra genii *Hesperos* and *Lucifer* below.

Like in ancient Capua (Mitra altar in S. Maria Capuavetere) and perhaps also in the island of Ponza the cult of Mitra must have been brought to Capri by serfs and soldiers of Anatolian origin (Asia Minor) who continued to serve in the island that was still an imperial estate during the second and third centuries.

Part II

MEDIAEVAL AND MODERN CAPRI

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

When the last emperor of the West disappeared as though he were a wraith in the Castrum Lucullanum, Capri ceased to have its peculiar legal position as an imperial estate and became again a part of the township and of the state of Naples. But the great political events which took place around Naples during the sixth to the nineteenth centuries (the struggle between Goths and Byzantines; the autonomous duchy and its hardy if unlucky defence against the Norman duchies; the Norman–Souabian monarchy in Sicily; Naples a capital with the Angevin, Aragonese, Spanish and Bourbon dynasties) had but few and slight echoes in Capri. The island, that was exposed to the Muslim inroads along the sea route between Agropolis and the Garigliano, was mostly abandoned to itself; and the best defence the inhabitants could offer was that of leaving their old dwelling centre on the Marina and taking shelter on the hills between the walled citadel and the Castiglione Castle (*fig. 49*).

Its resources were few; its population both impoverished and decimated by pirates and plague; its religious Orders had as their essential aims other than charitable and beneficent activities. Consequently the only dealings the inhabitants had with the Kings and Viceroys in Naples, aimed mainly at securing immunities, privileges and exemptions from taxation and from the dues that were claimed not only by the royal Government, but not less insistently also by the religious bodies and the pious institutions, bringing about: law suits unending and no less costly than the taxes themselves, petitions and supplications that had to be renewed with every political change and with every succession, finally fierce complaints against governors who were either dishonest or inefficient. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was added the feud between the municipalities of Capri and Anacapri about the rather difficult settlement of their reciprocal rights concerning their civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction; rivalries that occasionally broke out into actual rebellions of the Anacapri clergy against the Bishop and the clergy of Capri. So that the local history of the mediaeval

and modern times (at all events up to the nineteenth century) has few important events to record; it is, however, one of the most interesting municipal histories in the whole of southern Italy, and though some of its particular aspects and questions have been carefully studied, a full treatment is still lacking. Only the most salient facts will be mentioned here.

The emperor Ludovic II is reputed to have relieved Capri from its subjection to Naples and transferred it to Amalfi in 866 in order to reward the people of Amalfi whose armed intervention helped to free the bishop Athanasius from the prison in which his nephew, Duke Sergius had placed him. Yet that deed of donation must have rather been intended as an affirmation of the emperor's rights in the controversy between the Western and Eastern empire than has an act having actually juridical value. It is on the contrary to be believed that the sailors and crews of Capri took part with the fleets of Naples, Sorrento and Amalfi in the successful expedition duke Sergius led against the Saracens of Licosa in 846, in that which his son, Caesarius Consul made to free Gaeta, and in the expedition duke Gregory IV made against the Saracen colony on the Garigliano. During the heroic struggle which the duchy fought against Roger II Capri also had its share by besieging and capturing the small garrison of the island, an episode that is probably to be connected with the blockade of Naples that king Roger II established by land and by sea in 1136–7.

Capri had its first great feudal lord in count Eliseo Arcucci, the king's admiral during the rule of the Souabians and Frederick II (1230) and during the Angevin rule its first royal protectress in Joan I when count Giacomo Arcucci was the queen's secretary, and her grants and privileges rendered the foundation of the monumental Certosa possible (1371). The tragic death of that queen and the succession of the Durazzo House to the throne diminished the benefits Capri had been receiving from the Angevins, the most providential one being the permission to import cereals in an amount adequate to the needs of the island.

The new Aragonese dynasty badly needed a merchant as well as a military fleet with the result that men belonging to the poor people living on the islands and on the sea shore were in great request, and consequently the new dinasty was not less generous towards Capri: Alphonse of Aragon granted diplomas forbidding the sale of the island; providing a yearly salary for the governor or captain of the place (1445); exempting the population from the payment to the Court of a tax of ten *carlini* for each family or hearth; allowing the municipality (*universitas*) of Capri to exact a tax on the fishing of *aguglie*, a local kind of fish which is still in general use among the inhabitants and which

FIG. 49 — FORNICES AND ARCHWAYS IN THE MEDIAEVAL SECTOR OF CAPRI

the royal diploma may have rendered more tasty. The most notable decree, however, was due to king Frederick of Aragon who on October 24th 1496 put an end to the dissension between Capri and Anacapri, by allowing Anacapri inhabitants the same exemptions and immunities that the other islanders enjoyed, and by separating the Anacapri administration and revenue from those of Capri; a decree that was later confirmed by the Great Captain Gonsalvo de Cordoba (1506), the first viceroy

of the new Spanish dynasty of Ferdinand II, the Catholic. It was an important decree which appears to have been the result of excessive pride on the part of the islanders, rather than of a serene evaluation of the real needs of the island, so much so that the Neapolitan historian Giulio Cesare Capaccio added as a comment: *in egestate tamen vivunt, contendentes superbia.*

Capri was not very lucky during the imperial rule of Charles V and of his great viceroy Don Pedro de Toledo (1532–1553); for in 1535 the fleet of the Sultan Soliman led by his admiral Kair Eddin, called Barbarossa, made a fearful inroad whose memory is still recorded by the name of Castel Barbarossa which the most ancient castle of Anacapri received; and in 1553 another piratical invasion was led by admiral Dragut, which brought about the sack and the arson of the Certosa. Following upon these inroads that went unpunished the islanders were allowed to carry arms, despite the previous stern police rules, and it is suggested that a kind of civilian militia was established.

The riots that made such upheaval in Naples during the first half of the seventeenth century do not appear to have had any echo in Capri; but a worse evil was common to Capri and its capital, the plague which raged in 1656. The infection was brought to the island through what may be called a romantic medium: a lock of hair of a young girl who died of the plague in Naples was secretely sent to her lover, who was a political exile in Capri, and was the cause of the spreading of the disease. The population was decimated, but since, as don Abbondio says in Manzoni's novel " one may recover from the plague ,, , the first who recovered were the good fathers of the Certosa who, after fulfilling their duty to assist the stricken, as the more lenient chroniclers wrote, were enabled to complete the building of their monastery, to decorate it, and to build the lodging of their Prior with the gifts and the legacies they received from many of the victims of the plague. The second half of that century was also the period of the greatest religious zeal in the island thanks to Sister Serafina di Dio who, by founding the convents of Capri and Anacapri for the " Teresiane scalze ,, appeared to wish to rival the Certosa of count Arcucci and of queen Joan.

When Naples became a capital again during the wise reign of Charles of Bourbon (1734) Capri also enjoyed a period of peaceful welfare. Capri could not be indifferent to the scholarly zeal with which excavations were started at Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae; consequently the uncovering of *Villa Jovis* was taken in hand; and those early haphazard works did at any rate provide the S. Stefano cathedral with the finest marble floor taken from the imperial Villa, and less wisely turned the four

finest ancient columns from the church of S. Costanzo into slabs and frames for the Caserta Royal Palace.

The actual beginning, however, of the excavations at Capri was due to Ferdinand IV's passion for the chase; for, an Austrian, Norbert Hadrawa who was in the king's company during a trip to Capri to catch quails, was granted special permission to excavate antiquities on behalf of the king and of the Royal Museum. Hadrawa's aims in availing himself of this concession were not purely scholarly and disinterested. On that occasion the king, besides thinking of quails and antiquities, was forced to decide the bitter quarrel between Capri and Anacapri concerning the choice of the civil and military magistrate on the island; for Anacapri asked for a magistrate having the right to hear civil law suits on the spot so as to avoid the expense and the risk entailed by journeys and hearings in Naples; while Capri, after having gone through a rather unfortunate experiment, wished to go back to the old custom of a single magistrate with both civil and military jurisdiction; a veiled threat to charge the two municipalities (*università*) with the costs of a juridical inspection, induced them wisely to prefer a civilian ruler to a military one and brought the controversy to an end. Equally advantageous was the king's intervention owing to which it was ordered that the Certosa should contribute an adequate monthly sum to the maintenance costs of the Capri schools, in one of which agriculture and navigation were taught.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the struggle for power over Europe between Napoleon and England gave the island a political and military position such as it had never had since the days of Augustus and Tiberius.

When Joseph Bonaparte was placed on the throne of Naples, Capri in 1806 was garrisoned by the French who intended to make of it a stronghold against the English fleet. The attempt was short lived for in May of the same year English naval forces fairly easily succeeded in occupying the island again, and establishing a strong garrison in it which under the command of the governor Hudson Lowe (who was later to be made Napoleon's jailer at St. Helena) actively attended to works of fortification by which it was hoped to make the island a small Gibraltar on the Neapolitan gulf. This serious check rankled with Napoleon and enraged him for it also caused serious embarrassment to the sea trade and the safety of the new kingdom. When Joseph Bonaparte was transferred to the Spanish throne his successor as king of Naples Joachim Murat planned to re–occupy Capri. On October 4th 1808 naval forces and cargo boats which had been gathered together, with 2000 French and Neapolitan soldiers on board under General Lamarque, sailed to-

wards Capri while the king watched the operation from the hills of Massa. By feigning landings at Marina Grande and Marina Piccola the forces succeeded in effecting a surprise landing on the almost inaccessible coves of the western coast at *Órrico, Rio* and *Gràdola* whence they laboriously reached the summit of Mount Solaro where 800 Maltese surrendered. Artillery fire from Mount Solaro compelled the rest of the garrison that had taken up a defensive position in the houses of Capri to surrender as well before the support of the English fleet was available. The French completed the fortification works on the island, and remained there up to Napoleon's fall and the restoration of the Bourbons (1815).

By these last adventures of landings, occupations and garrisons Capri, after a long lethargy of insular life stepped into the romantic life of the nineteenth century. There began then the visits of travellers, the race towards an island of happy solitude and country like patriarchal simplicity, the long stays and occasionally the settling of artists, authors, foreign poets and simply of romantic minded men. A guest of the hotel Pagano the earliest of Capri's hotels, was, in 1826, a romantic German, August Kopisch to him and to Angelo Ferraro, a local fisherman called " Riccio „ was due the discovery or rather the revelation of the " Blue Grotto „ that was henceforward to represent the enchanted mirage of the island.

THE CAPRI BUILDINGS

The Roman buildings in Capri possess a well marked character that is mainly due to the brevity of the period during which they all were built and developed in the days of Augustus and Tiberius; after Tiberius repair and restoration work were carried out rather than building during the second and third centuries of the empire. There is thus a gap between ancient and mediaeval structures such as in the Vesuvian zone is found between the towns buried by Vesuvius and modern constructions; with a difference, however, that the imperial buildings in Capri were left uncovered for a long time and could be utilized by the inhabitants in some of their most essential installations such as cisterns and vaults. Furthermore life in Capri was meagre and laborious, the island was politically and economically dependent on the duchy of Naples, on the republic of Amalfi and on the city of Sorrento; it bred no great feudal lords apart from Giacomo Arcucci the founder of the Certosa; so that nothing furthered large new buildings during the long and troublous period extending from the fall of the empire to the dawn of the kindom of Naples.

FIG. 50 — CAPRILE HOUSES
(ON THE LEFT THE VILLA OF THE QUEEN OF SWEDEN)

Early local architecture grew up and ripened among the ruins of the Roman structures which were not the grand imperial villas alone, but also modest *mansiones* and farm houses to be used by freedmen, slaves and peasants who attended to the management and farming of the imperial estate. So that when, during the Exarchate the earliest simple churches and chapels brought to Capri, by way of the coast of Amalfi and the Basilian sector of Calabria, the first Byzantine patterns wedded to, and enlivened by the patterns of the Arabo-Sicilian architecture in the treatment of the dome and the arch, there were found here craftsmen who were capable to lend an insular taste and savour to those shapes and those models, enriching them with the precious material stripped from the imperial buildings (S. Costanzo). And even when the Cistercian architecture acquired a courtly and monumental tone in the Certosa di S. Giacomo and the sixteenth and seventeenth church architecture found its expression in parish and conventual churches at Capri and Anacapri (S. Stefano and S. Salvatore at Capri, S. Sofia and S. Michele at Anacapri) by more ambitious designs and sizes not without the inspiration of Neapolitan models and masters, Capri architecture remained consistent

FIG. 51 — ANACAPRI — CAPRILE HOUSES

with itself and the distinct manner of the Capri craftsmen revealed itself in the dashing interpretation of decorative motifs and in the solution that was given to the problems of roofing vaults and domes.

Even better than in a few examples of church architecture the Capri building craft found a clear expression in houses, as well in those that cluster together in hamlets without losing

touch with the natural environment, as happens mainly in the centre and in the suburbs of Anacapri, as in those which with a hermit's humility face an overwhelming spectacle of rocks and sea and finally in those solid and modest ones that cluster beneath the threatening wall of a rock. And a visitor passing by the open door of a house is pleasantly impressed and continuously discovering perspectives and wide vistas on the horizon amid the twilight of the rooms and the cheering light of little courtyards and lobbies. There are no studied theatrical effects, but a feeling of serene happiness and inward meditation in front of the enchanting natural views (*fig. 50–51*).

The Capri house has its typical pattern: a vaulted structure limiting its vertical outline and enforcing a rigourously functional arrangement in the building; and though, because of this pattern it resembles the rural architecture of Campania, it is undeniable that it stands forward in Capri with so rich a creative felicity to appear even nowadays, after a century at least of far from beautiful modern buildings and of hybrid imitations, to give its typical insular character to Capri buildings. So exemplary a continuity of mural craftsmanship should be connected with the Roman and Greek–Byzantine traditions and with the peculiar geo–physical conditions of the island, such as above all the lack of building timber and the almost absolute penury of water springs, much rather than with hypothetical derivations from Arab and the Saracen models.

Among the several shapes of vaults, the hemispherical, the cradle and the groined, the former one, with a lowered arch, is certainly most ancient and derives immediately, without any eastern mediation, from the vaulted structures of the Romans. The Capri builders followed the system of the Roman architects of *Villa Jovis* in collecting rain water in the central part of the Villa, by transforming the *compluvium* entrance hall of the imperial Villa into a *testudo* covered grand–hall. It is because of this Capri–Roman tradition that a mediaeval cistern along the mule path from Materita to Anacapri with a hemispherical vault, small arches and a drawing well is nothing but a Roman cistern in its shape and operation (*fig. 52*).

The roof lacks the protection of beams and tiles, that represent an extraneous element in mural structures, but forms a solid unit joined by the ring of the vault to the supporting walls of the house, thus offering the wind a dynamically more resistent surface and to the rain water a surface on which to glide and from which to flow into the cistern; and the cavity of the cistern, which was cut into the rock, provided the stones required for the building. On the upper side of the vault the same plaster is applied

FIG. 52 – ANACAPRI
A CISTERN ALONG THE VIA DI MATERITA

as within the cistern, a water–proof plaster; but lacking the Roman crushed brick (*coccio–pesto*) recourse is made to a lighter material, the Vesuvian pumice stone lapilli that mixed with lime–milk, stretches, shapes and models itself when hammered with a wooden mallet like an armour plate on the covering vaults, on the sides of the flanking walls, on the openings and the interior of the channels along which the water flows. So that the roof is merely an upturned vault, in the shape of the mould below. The Capri house was born of this simple, primitive and rational structural craftsmanship. Poverty leading to simplicity and simplicity to a felicitous architectural creation; and while the skill of a long tradition of mural craftsmasters ensures the continuity and the fidelity of the structural patterns, the creative fancy of a foreman–builder more imaginative and wilful may give new elegant, tasteful and daring solutions to those patterns. Thus in the " Boffe „ sector of Anacapri which is crossed by a square we admire the miracle that a pure and straightforward local architecture may accomplish in a cluster of urban dwelling houses.

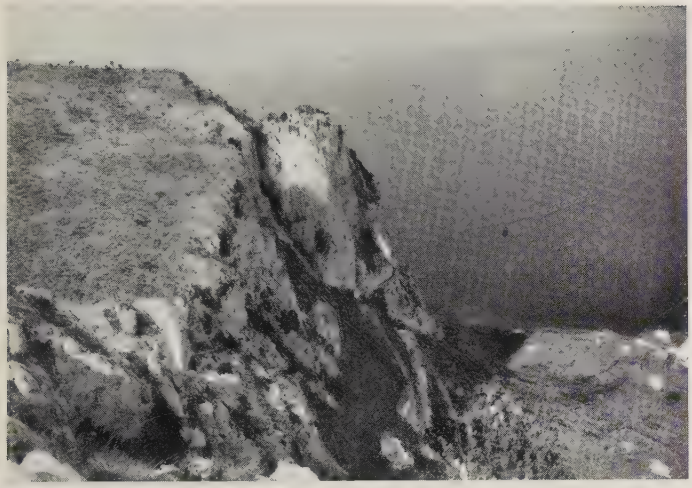

FIG. 53 – MONTE SOLARO AND THE CASTEL BARBAROSSA ROCK

THE CASTLES

The principal and most imposing example of fortified residence is the *Villa Jovis* of Tiberius, which by clustering its structures on the top of the mountain and by possessing capacious water cisterns rather belongs to the type of a feudal castle than of a Villa.

The mediaeval castles which were erected in the most calamitous moments in the history of the island rather as temporary shelters than as marks of a feudal seignory, were not as imposing either in structure or size.

The Castello del Castiglione was built to complete the defences of the Greek acropolis to protect the mediaeval sector of inhabited Capri, but was mainly used as a shield for the grotto into which people fleeing from the Saracen inroads took refuge. The Castello di Barbarossa, most aerial and romantic of all, nestling amid the pines and the rocks barring the Anacapri pass, owes its name to the Algerian pirate Keir-Eddin who led the most tremendous inroad the island ever endured; but its structure with a little apsed chapel in its centre

FIG. 54 – ANACAPRI – THE TORRE DELLA GUARDIA AND THE PINO HEADLAND

is much earlier; and is perhaps the one Byzantine work of fortification that can be identified in the island (*fig. 53*). Later as defences of the Anacapri plateau were built the embanked Tower of Madonna della Guardia protecting the landing place of the Cala del Faro (*figs. 54–55*); the partly destroyed Castle on Monte Solaro and the look-out Tower on the Damecuta promontory. Finally, when the Certosa acquired the seignory over most of the Anacapri land it built a fine sixteenth century tower at Materita (Torre di Materita – Munthe ownership) as a refuge and a defence for the farmhouse and the peasants on its lands like a feudal lord might have done (*fig. 56*).

The forts built during the nineteenth century by the English and the French at Palazzo, a Mare on the S. Michele hill, at Damecuta, Campetiello, Órrico and on Monte Solaro in order to make Capri a fortified bastion of the Neapolitan Gulf, only helped towards the destruction of the still imposing remains of the Roman Villas.

FIG. 55 — ANACAPRI — THE LIGHTHOUSE HEADLAND AND THE MARMOLATA ROCKS

FIG. 56 — ANACAPRI — THE TORRE DI MATERITA

THE CHURCHES [1]

The most ancient church is a humble chapel based on a cistern in the Roman Villa of Monte S. Michele, to which a tiny apse was added with frescoes of a late Byzantine style, painted on a plaster covering the old lime and brick plaster of the cistern.

1) A more detailed account of monastic and religious architecture may be read in R. PANE, *Capri*, Venice, Neri Pozza 1955.

FIG. 57 – MONTE SOLARO – S. MARIA A CETRELLA

Other little churches and chapels grafting, sometimes tastefully late Gothic forms on the traditional Byzantine building patterns crown, with the function of hermitages, the most lonely and picturesque heights and crags of the island. The CAPPELLA DI S. MICHELE in Via della Croce (along the road ascending to Monte Tiberio) was built by Alfarello Ferrace, a local nobleman towards the end of the fourteenth century, and in its modest size offers one of the most harmonious examples of ascensional rhythm in the covering vaults, the little vault of the *pronaos*, the central transept and the half-dome of the presbytery.

The little church of S. MARIA DEL SOCCORSO looks picturesquely down on the ruins of *Villa Jovis* from the sheer drop of the rocks which according to tradition were stained by the bloody cruelties of Tiberius. Though it has been altered by some excessive work of renovation the *pronaos* with its little pediment and the humble parish house, both backing against the original body of the nave, lend it a straightforward rustic character with some link, in its hemispherical vault with the imposing vaults of the cisterns of the imperial villa near by. Probably the *Cappella di S. Leonardo*, which is also recorded

as standing among the ruins of *Villa Jovis*, must have been located in one of the rooms of the western quarter of the villa, for the hermit was for a time charged with the tending of the lighthouse.

On the level ground in front of the little church an un-beautiful statue of the Madonna, on a high pedestal, was erected in 1901 by the Count of Caserta a member of the Bourbon family perhaps to expiate other sins besides those of Tiberius.

The more solitary and wild S. Maria a Cetrella looks over from the rocks dropping sheer down from Monte Solaro to the Marina Piccola (*fig. 57*). It is a mistaken, or at all events an unproven suggestion, that this sanctuary was originally Pagan; and it is certainly wrong to derive its name from " Venus cytherea ,, , for its name more simply and obviously is to be connected with the name of a herb or odoriferous plant growing in the gorge near by. With two naves in transept timidly modelled on the Gothic naves of the Certosa, with its hermitage whose primitive Franciscan gracefulness is in no way impaired by some rustic seventeenth century decorations, and above all by its close clinging to the rocks that support and clutch it on all sides, S. Maria a Cetrella is the purest expression of the religiousness and the popular architecture in Capri.

Since the most ancient parish church of Capri was defaced by a seventeenth century rebuilding, and since the ancient and modest " Chiesa di S. Anna ,, has been blocked in by houses, the most noble example of religious architecture is to be found in the Chiesa di S. Costanzo alla Marina where the principal township of Capri was and where a more ancient church of basilica type must have stood amid buildings surviving from the Greek and Roman ages. A relief connected with the Mitra cult found here (see p. 90) does not allow us to imagine that a Pagan temple existed here and far less that it was dedicated to the cult of Mitra. St. Costanzo was chosen as a patron saint protecting the island against Saracen landings long before his church had its present structure which was erected in two different epochs, the first of the eleventh-twelfth centuries, the second of the fourteenth.

As may be better realized from the inside of the building the initial nucleus shows the typical Greek cross pattern enclosed within a row of twelve columns in a square (*fig. 58*); four of the columns at the crossing of the nave and transept support the lofty cylindrical vault with eight windows; the other columns support the hemispherical vaults of the minor branches; four columns of yellow and cipolin ancient marble that presumably

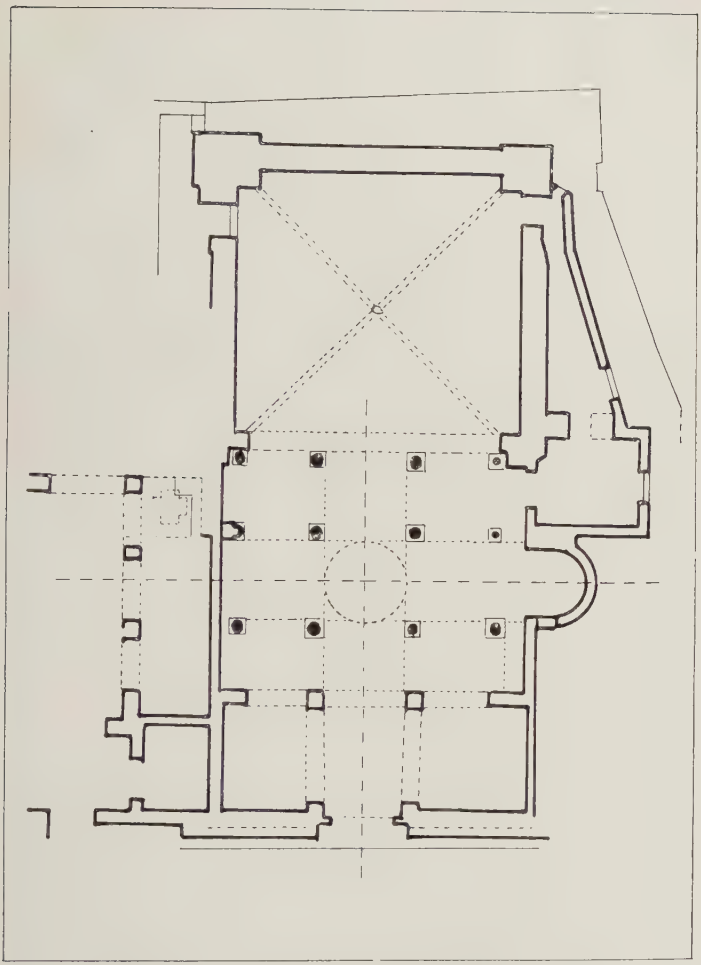

FIG. 58 — THE CHURCH OF S. COSTANZO ALLA MARINA (PLAN)

had been taken from the neighbouring imperial Villa of " Palazzo a Mare ,, were replaced in 1750 with grey granite columns. Then the church opened on the eastern side as may be clearly seen from the apse with which the central nave ends, from the little porch on the outside that was later closed and from the bell tower that stood by the side of the entrance with a small bulbar cupola above it. About 1330 count Arcucci the same who a few years later founded the Certosa, walled up the eastern porch adding a large presbytery with a groined vault on the south, and opened the present entrance preceded by a vestibule on the north side to which recent repairs have given an excessively Gothic appearance. In any event S. Costanzo, with its late Byzantine forms clearly influenced by Arabo-Sicilian shapes in the sharply accentuated inflection of its arches and in the covering of the central dome and of the bell tower and with its cruciform presbytery, represents the most daring and felicitous welding of the forms distinguishing the oldest ecclesiastical architecture in Capri (*fig. 59*).

The other less important churches of this period show a more marked late Gothic imprint, like S. Maria a Costantinopoli and S. Cataldo at Anacapri; the latter is reduced to a mere ruin amid the olive trees of the Materita valley.

The Cappella di S. Antonio standing almost on top of the rocky stairs to Anacapri, is the most modest of the Capri churches and looks like a plain house. It has a little pediment reminding one of some pediments above funerary pillars and shrines belonging to Roman provincial art, with a tiny bell tower that is also shaped as a shrine and a curbed parapet that looks as though it were intended to gather the building together and to prevent it from dropping into the abyss.

Luckily for the sake of the sacred buildings in Capri the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tendency to transform and amplify did not exert here the influence it had in Campania: shapes and sizes preserved a just connexion with the buildings of the environment; and, what mattered most, the local craftsmen exerted a providential restraint inspired by the tasteful local balance also on baroque architecture. The main parish and monastic churches of *S. Stefano* and of *S. Salvatore* at Capri, and of *S. Sofia* and *S. Michele* at Anacapri belong to this period.

The Chiesa di S. Stefano that is now an effective screen in the Piazzetta of Capri (*fig. 60*) was built about 1687 above the ruins of the earlier cathedral to which the bell tower belonged that is now transformed into " Torre dell'Orologio ,, and was designed by the architect Picchiatti. Luckily Picchiatti, who was keener on collecting Capri antiquities on behalf of the

FIG. 59 — THE CHURCH OF S. COSTANZO ALI A MARINA

FIG. 60 – THE CHURCH OF S. STEFANO – DOME AND BELL TOWER

FIG. 61 – THE CHURCH OF S. STEFANO.
THE HIGH ALTAR AND THE TIBERIUS FLOOR FROM VILLA JOVIS

Viceroy, entrusted his plans such as he had conceived them for a three naved church, with a central dome, and lesser domes on the side chapels, to that most fanciful and experienced among master builders, Marziale Desiderio, of Amalfi, and Master Desiderio, the ancestor of all " Marzianelli ,, , interpreted and carried out Picchiatti's pompous plans in accordance with local taste. Its Baroque is free from adornments, and made functionnal by the Capri roofing style of crushed lapilli mainly intended to collect the rain water, so that the richly moulded roof of S. Stefano with its play of large and small domes, looks like a natural evolution of the close and tight vaults of the Certosa. On the inside the superb polychrome floor of inlaid marble comes from *Villa Jovis* and probably from its imperial *triclinium*, while the smaller floor of the Cappella del Rosario is supposed to have belonged to the Roman Villa of Tragàra; despite the scandalous gossip about Augustus and Tiberius these floors are now sanctified (*fig. 61*).

More austere and sterner in character and more imposing in size is the CHIESA DEL SALVATORE with the adjoining convent of S. Teresa, the former founded in 1678, the latter consecrated in 1685 after the plans of Dionisio Lazzari belonging to Fansago's school (*fig. 62*). The building is unfinished

FIG. 62 — THE CHURCH AND THE CONVENT OF THE THERESIAN SISTERS

and was affected by the silent and firm will-power and the anxious vicissitudes of Suor Serafina di Dio who embodied Capri's seventeenth century religious zeal by her willful and unrelenting fervour. The paving maiolicas seem to forecast the floor of S. Michele at Anacapri.

The two major churches of Anacapri show a different local and courtly tone.

FIG. 63 — ANACAPRI — THE CHURCH OF S. SOFIA

The parish church of S. Sofia which with its conical dome supported by a high drum and its minor domes asymmetrically arranged so picturesquely dominate the surrounding houses, betrays the lack of a general plan or at any rate that of the hand of a trained architect; but it displays a harmonious restfulness in its elegant façade almost in the style of Borromini (*fig. 63*).

The Chiesa di S. Michele is on the contrary the work of a great architect. It has a central outline and a dome on an octagonal outline, four large apses on the prolonged axes of the cross and four minor domes on the diagonal axes that end with round apses. It is an admirable complex of architectural elements emphasized by the skilful toning of the stuccoes in their mellowed whiteness which bestows even greater relief upon the superb maiolica floor on which the greatest figured composition of Neapolitan maiolica develops: Adam and Eve in the Earthly Paradise (*fig. 64*). The church was finished in 1719 and its design is ascribed with some reason to Antonio Vaccaro who worked the similar plan of the church della Concezione a Montecalvario in Naples. Vaccaro, who was also a painter, must also be credited with arranging to subordinate the decoration of the floor to the architecture of the church.

The floor, dated of 1761, was made by Leonardo Chiaiese, a maiolica craftsman of Abruzzo who exercised

his art in Naples and is reported to have made this floor after a some cartoons by Solimena, perhaps those now preserved in the British Museum; possibly because he kept too close to a direct model, so vast a composition being transferred and enlarged from a picture to a floor, his work is not not now easy to view as a whole.

Thus the heavenly vision reported by a romantic visitor towards the end of the eighteenth century of Anacapri seemed to be summed up in the monastic church of S. Michele; he wrote: " Here far away from the regions inhabited by men there hovers like a pensil garden a small land dotted here and there with white houses and green fields ! ,,. But Adam and Eve are presented during their last period of fellowship with the beasts of creation, before they were driven out of Paradise into a bitter exile...

THE CERTOSA

Just as *Villa Jovis* from the height of Mount Tiberius expresses and sums up Capri's imperial period, the Certosa, sunk with its extended buildings within the narrow valley between the Castiglione and the Tuoro hills (*fig.* 65), expresses the mediaeval and monastic period of Capri in its most noble and monumental form. There is no evidence either for or against the existence of a Roman villa in this place; yet the lack of clear traces of remains and the low ground itself on which the monastic edifice stands, suggest that this place had been discarded as a site for imperial buildings. The long row of " Camerelle ,, running along the present Via di Tragara which, according to the most likely interpretation served as cisterns as well as a viaduct connecting the slopes of the several hills, must have marked the last inferior limit reached by the Roman Villas on this stretch; the Villas instead commanded this valley with the sumptuous " Villa del Castiglione ,, and the lesser one of the " Unghia Marina ,,. We prefer therefore to ascribe the choice of a site untouched by the invading imperial buildings to the deliberate intention of the founder and of the builder. And this enclosed and peaceful place seemed to agree with the spirit of monastic life, particularly at a time when the Capri dwellings were in their turn surrounded by a walled enclosure and the uninhabited slopes all around were covered with pines and olive trees: a man looking down from the very edge of the terrace (92 metres) was prevented from seeing much farther away by the rounded outline of the coast; on one side was the sheer side of the Castiglione hill into which the " Via di Augusto ,, has now been cut; on the other

FIG. 64 — ANACAPRI — THE CHURCH OF S. MICHELE — THE MAIOLICA FLOOR WITH ADAM AND EVE DRIVEN OUT OF THE EARTHLY PARADISE

FIG. 65 — THE CERTOSA — GENERAL VIEW

side the horizon was cut off by the gigantic spiers of the Faraglioni. It may, perhaps, have been considered prudent, in view of the much feared threat of Saracen attacks, to conceal the building in that low ground, instead of erecting it on a more conspicuous and higher place on the hills.

The Certosa was founded between 1371 and 1374 by Giacomo Arcucci, count of Minervino and Altamura, who was secretary to Joan I, queen of Naples and belonged to the most noble family of Capri; to the same family Eliseo Arcucci, count of Capri, also belonged and he was an admiral in the service of Frederick II. Count Giacomo Arcucci, a rich and powerful feudal lord, built the Certosa di S. Giacomo as a thanksgiving for the birth of his first born from his wife Margherita Sanseverina; and by the favour of the queen, he endowed it with lands, gifts, papal bulls and ecclesiastical prerogatives and privileges, so as to ensure its temporal and spiritual patrimony for ever. But it was fated that the first great builder in mediaeval Capri, after Tiberius the builder of Roman Capri, should also come to an unhappy end; for, being involved in the crisis of the Angevin monarchy by which queen Joan was deprived of the throne and

tragically killed (1381), he was himself banned and stripped of his possessions, and only obtained by grace to be received as a pilgrim and guest in that very Certosa he had so richly endowed. The monks themselves paid the ransom for the deliverance of his son, Jannuccio who had been taken a prisoner and to whose birth the foundation of the monastery was due. Count Giacomo Arcucci spent his last years in monastic life, dying in 1386, the year in which Ladislaus of Durazzo became king of Naples. He was perhaps the only great penitent in the monastery, for the Certosa, steadily increasing in wealth and landed properties, housing but few monks who were attended upon by a number of servants, ended by acquiring full control over the economic and agricultural activities of Capri, because of the ample revenues and the taxes it exacted in the island, the lands it owned on the mainland and the largesse and assistance it more or less generously granted to the poorest among the island families. The Certosa was sacked and burnt in 1553 by the pirate Dragut; it was repaired and enlarged in 1563 when a look-out and defensive tower was raised within view of the sea; and being further enriched by the legacies of the dead from the plague in 1656, its prosperity finally aroused quarrels and contrasts with the clergy and the bishop of the island, who were poor and in need, so that, when in 1807 Joseph Bonaparte suppressed the monasteries and seized their possessions, the end of their great Certosa was learned by the inhabitants of Capri with no great grief; nor was the Certosa recalled to life when the Bourbons returned. Yet, before the monks left their old monastery in 1808 the tower that had been raised against the pirates in 1563 crumbled like the Tower of the lighthouse at *Villa Jovis* had crumbled a few days before Tiberius died.[1]

The leaving of the monks marked the ruin of the monumental monastery, for, like the imperial villas, it was turned into a place of detention: into a jail at first (1815), then into a hospice for invalids, finally into a barracks for a disciplinary company of the army (1860); and despite the repairs which were made and the many more it still requires, it cannot yet be said to have been given a destination in accord with its exceptional importance in the history and the architecture of Capri.

1) The crumbling was not due to an earthquake as in the case of the Tiberius lighthouse, but to a landslide from the rock on which the Torre della Certosa stood; the falling rocks obstructed the narrow entrance to the *Grotta Oscura*, a sea-level grotto that was described by seventeenth and eighteenth centuries writers, but of which no trace is now to be found.

The name of the architect who first planned it, is unknown, and unknown those of the architects who supervised its later enlargements: yet the Certosa reveals its distinct Capri character by the superb extent of its roofing vaults, which disclose the outline of the structure below, of the groined, hemispherical and fanned vaults by the shape of their external development; and since their dates are clearly established, they mark the first chapter of Capri's architecture. The plan of the buildings (*fig. 66*), however it be vast and complex, develops in a series of successive separate squares, yet communicating with one another: I) – the little cloister (Chiostrino) around which are ranged the most ancient and monumental parts of the monastery, namely the Church and the Refectory: II) – the large cloister (Chiostro Grande) with the cells for the monks; III) – the section of store rooms and services; IV) – the Prior's quarters. Local historians have unanimously maintained that the builders took the Certosa di S. Martino in Naples as a model for the Capri Certosa; but, in truth, whith the exception of the large Cloister, added during the second half of the sixteenth century and probably during the 1563 restoration, and the portico with arches and pillars, resembling the arrangement that is seen in the largest cloister of S. Martino, the Capri Certosa is based mainly on the plan of the Cistercians monasteries; which in their turn, by the regular arrangement of the rooms around open or porticoed areas, may in fact be traced back to the Roman villas with their more or less large *peristilia*. Above this solid and substantially organic complex of volumes and geometrical forms, rises as a fanciful seventeenth century whim the Torre dell'Orologio with its curly spire similar to the triangular point of a Neapolitan spire (*fig. 67*) and provides the last touch of Capri craftsmanship to the Certosa by reproducing in stone a metallic model in a somewhat popular taste.

A ramp leads to a Watch Tower with its typical rounded battlements and to the vestibule of the CHURCH. In the lunette above the portal a fresco by Andrea Vanni of Siena (1332–1414) represents the dedication ceremony: The Madonna with Child Jesus between St. Bruno and St. James; praying by St. Bruno is queen Joan; by St. James is count Arcucci in the act of offering a model of the Certosa, which the painter wished to show as roofed with domes instead of groined vaults. The inside displays a single straight nave with an apse at the end with high, single opening clerestorey windows along the nave and a triple opening window in the apse; it is divided by pillars and ribbed arches in three successive crossed spans having simple sharp edges without any ribbing. Luckily neither a

FIG. 67 – THE CERTOSA – VAULTS AND THE TORRE DELL'OROLOGIO

few remains of late seventeenth century paintings on the walls, nor the stucco decorations on the apse, impair the simple and solemn severity of the interior, so unlike the Gothic models of the great fourteenth century churches in Naples.

I. Between the nave of the church on the east, a gallery lighted by low windows and round openings above on the north, and the smaller refectory hall on the west there opens the elegant CHIOSTRINO (little cloister) (*fig. 68*) to which recent repairs have restored its original architectural and structural arrangement with crossed spans supported by columns and capitals belonging to the Roman and Byzantine ages, instead of the squat temporary pillars with which they had been replaced.

II. By the luminous grace of the Chiostrino that seems to temper the monastic sterness of the surrounding rooms, the vast area of the Chiostro Grande appears more imposing but less colourful; it has four long portico wings with arches supported by massive pillars, and seems too severe in its geometrical lines as compared to the remaining structures which used to complete harmoniously their vertical outline by the extrados bending of the vaults (*fig. 69*). The large Cloister was built at the end of the sixteenth century at a time when the life of the monastery was most active. With the unbroken series of cells ranged along three of its sides, northern, eastern and southern, with the little Cloister of the church and the quarter of the cellars, the services and the guests, it was intended to be the centre of the life of the monastery: the spacious cistern on one side sunk into the ground to collect the rain, indicates, here as well as by the cisterns of *Villa Jovis* the overwhelming need for a water supply in the centre of the buildings.

III. As in the great Roman villas the rustic quarters of the cellars and of the processing of agricultural products was set apart from the industrial section, thus here in the Certosa the complicated body of the rooms on the south-western corner was set apart. This section of the monastery suffered the greatest changes and is the least studied one; it would on the contrary repay for a careful examination and a survey so as to make out better, despite many and arbitrary transformations, the nature and the use of the several rooms and thus estimate the amount of the crops and of the revenues the Certosa controlled in wine, oil and cereals; which amounts to saying a considerable part of the agricultural crops of the island, for the patrimony of the Certosa, in the periods of its greatest wealth and prosperity, cannot have been much inferior to the private estates which the emperors owned in Capri.

IV. – Because the cells on the southern side are still in a completely ruined condition, and those on the other sides have

FIG. 68 — THE CERTOSA — THE CHIOSTRINO

FIG. 69 — THE CERTOSA — THE CHIOSTRO GRANDE

undergone transformations and adaptations, the most singular aspect of monastic life escapes us. We see something of it in the ample and almost luxurious QUARTIERE DEL PRIORE, that having perhaps been built during the later seventeenth century enlargements, formed an apartment standing by itself, isolated upon the highest terrace of the rock facing the sea.

The Prior's lodging is preceded by an ample square garden surrounded by a high wall; it stands on the edge of a sheer rock, and has the loggia and some dwelling rooms above and more resting rooms below; it seems thus to reproduce the arrangement of the section of the imperial Loggia or *Villa Jovis* or of the smaller, and also imperial one, of Damecuta. Clearly the Prior of the Certosa di S. Giacomo and emperor Tiberius shared the same liking for a fine view over rocks and sea. And just as Tiberius walked down to the Loggia of the *triclinium* to enjoy the grand sight of the wide gulf, the Prior stepped down from his loggia along a goat path as far as a little belvedere terrace that the waves washed: the relish for penance and solitude did not prevent him from enjoying the beauty of the place (*fig. 70*).

FIG. 70 – ROCKS BELOW THE CERTOSA

And perhaps the curious account that Bouchard who visited Capri and the Certosa in 1632, gave, is connected with this lodging up on a rock and with the tiny path cut into the rock; he writes: " The Prior of the Certosa had with his own hands cut out a road to go down to the Marina, and had excavated several rooms and galleries in the rock ,,. Here was a legend growing about the Prior's secret life, just as a legend had grown about the secret life of Tiberius.

CAPRI LITERATURE

After the description *de Capreis insula* the Neapolitan historian Fabio Giordano included in his still unpublished *Historia neapolitana,* [1] and after the amusing account that J. J. Bouchard gave of his visit to Capri in 1632, [2] nothing was written about Capri by eighteenth century antiquarians and

1) The description was published by Norman Douglas, *Capri Materials for a Description of the island,* Florence, 1930.

2) Is was published by Edwin Cerio, *Capri nel Seicento,* Naples, 1934.

scholars but the *Ragguagli* in which Norbert Hadrawa described in letter form his excavations and discoveries and also the natural, economic and social conditions of the island. But apart from the discussions and learned investigations of Neapolitan scholars and of more meritorious local scholars, Capri made its appearance in the great movement of German romantic literature shortly after the revelation of the "Blue Grotto„. It was Kopisch himself who met Platen in Naples and induced the German poet to visit Capri in 1827; and the idyll *The Capri Fisherman,* the first poetic voice about Capri was inspired by that visit and by a leisurely pilgrimage through the island on donkey's back and in the company of his friend who was a painter. A few years later August Kopisch, replying to some criticism and controversies told himself the story of his romantic discovery of the "Blue Grotto„ thus starting the whole series of geophysical, literary and poetical works that followed it. That was the most fortunate period of Capri's revival, when Capri the one goal at which all German romantic travellers aimed; and the hotel Pagano, that joined the names of Tiberius and of the "Blue Grotto„ had writers, poets and painters as its guests. The year 1853 marked the visit of two exceptional guests and two no less exceptional literary events: Joseph Scheffel, an undergraduate who forsaking his law studies wrote at Capri in the course of six weeks *Die Trompeter von Säkkingen,* a masterpiece of the later German romanticism; and Ferdinand Gregorovius the author of the history of mediaeval Rome and a felicitous describer of Italian landscapes who wrote the finest description of Capri belonging to the romantic period during a charmed summer he spent in the island. This poetic cycle ended with the *Idylls* and poems written by Paul Heyse (*Auf Capri, Hochzeit auf Capri*) which were echoed and remembered by lesser poets and writers.

The exodus of Russian intellectuals from their country after the Russo–Japanese war in 1905 contributed to make of Capri a literary and political refuge instead of the resort for romanticists. During those years Maxim Gorki, surrounded by the halo of a martyr of the Czars landed in Capri and was welcomed by the cosmopolitan residents in the island, by Neapolitan literary circles and by Italian socialists; but his brief residence in Capri (1906–7) was perhaps more beneficial to the health than to the literary activity of this great refugee.

The solitary voice of an Italian poetess Ada Negri may, perhaps, be best connected because of her *Canti dell'isola* (1924)

with the last echoes of German romanticism; and Pietro Gadda Conti's novel, *Gagliarda, ossia la presa di Capri*, (2nd ed. 1942) to the many historical and romantic accounts of the capture of Capri in 1806.

Among contemporary authors two writers appear to share the primacy in Capri literature, Axel Munthe, a northern, and Edwin Cerio, an islander.

Axel Munthe with his *The story of S. Michele* (1929) which is mainly an autobiographical account of his adventurous life before and during his residence in Capri, represents a happy meeting of northern romanticism with the most sunlit land in Italy and the pages in which, without sentimentalising his care for animals, he describes the island still lost in the happy unawareness of the land of the Pheaecians are truly poetic. Those pages have undoubtedly contributed to set Capri once again in the place that German romanticism had given it in international literature; and for this, and for his loyalty towards his cherished island much praise is due to this great Swedish author. But his vigorous personality amid the Dannunzian fashion prevailing in the literary circles of Rome and Naples, allowed itself to be drawn towards the manners and the taste of the reigning fashion, which was quite alien to his northern temperament, with the result that his less spontaneous and more ephemeral activity of art lover and art collector was brought forth, causing him also to make a parade of some pseudo-architectural works which have nothing to do with the purity of the Capri landscape, and which he more or less openly himself disowned during his last solitary stay at the Torre di Materita.

Quite different is Edwin Cerio, who has the balanced mind of a writer and a naturalist, the varied experience of an engineer, a botanist and an islander; and who is endowed with a biting and destructive humour that never forsakes him, not even when he is faced with the poetic and heroic myths of his island. By his most felicitous book *Aria di Capri* (1927) and many more pages about Capri in his other books, he appears to aim at bringing back the men and the things of his island from the perilous ways of cosmopolitism to the simpler and more straightforward local manners; a reaction which is inspired by Latin and Mediterranean culture standing against every form of posing and abnormal exoticism. A reaction, however, that ultimately is caused by the caustic and irreducibly ironical temperament that is inborn in him; for Cerio, with his mind open to all currents in modern literature, rather than to disown and condemn cosmopolitan Capri, appears to wish to make himself its jealous guardian and privileged lover.

As a scholar who has delved in documents and archives, Cerio by his book *Capri nel Seicento* has skilfully shown what the history of Capri should be like. As a naturalist and a careful observer of the life of plants in his *Flora di Capri* he has lived again and transfigured the sexual life of plants in a pantheistic spirit, going as far as pathological and scandalous gossip, such as that of Tacitus and Suetonius in their reports on Tiberius in Capri.

Thus, in these two so different and almost opposite characters, of a northern writer and of a local writer, the Mediterranean essence of Capri appears to find its expression.

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TIBETAN PAINTED SCROLLS

BY

GIUSEPPE TUCCI

Like India and China, even Tibet has its own painting, which was, originally, a ritual act. It puts us into direct contact with the mystical exoterism of the most recent Buddhism and has an important aesthetic value, too. In fact, most of these paintings show an accurate choice of tones of colour, the most brilliant effects of luminosity and a mastership of design. There is no temple or private chapel without a great number of these special paintings on cloth, known to the Tibetans by the name of « Tànka », which either symbolize a definite mystical inspiration or illustrate the life and works of the great representatives of Lamaism.

The Author, who on several occasions explored semi-unknown zones of the « Country of Snows » (Tibet), has collected, during his wanderings, a great number of these Tankas; with his work, he intends to interpret and explain their religious and symbolic meaning and reconstruct the spiritual world whence they sprang and of which they are the visible expression.

He has also sketched the history of Tibetan painting with a careful search for foreign influences — Indian, Nepalese, Chinese and Central-Asiatic — which have caused or modified it, and has put into evidence the representative and aesthetic value of various schools and styles. But, since Tibetan painting belongs to a world which is spiritually far from ours and still imperfectly known to us, the Author has illustrated its cultural and historical background by reconstructing the Tibetan history from the 11th to the 18th century; he has then particularly illustrated the literature, the Buddhist agiography, the religious sects and the « Diamond Vehicle », a particular Buddhist tendency on which te Tibetan religion is founded.

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